

COMPLETE NOVEL BY ANNE O'HANNAH

SMITH'S

APRIL, 1944

MAGAZINE

15 CENTS



TEN GREAT SHORT STORIES

BY HOLMAN EDDY EDWIN L. SARIN WINIFRED ARNOLD VIRGINIA HIPPLEY ET AL.

How Very Comfortable!

This is the sort of feeling that you have after a bath or a wash with Pears—a feeling of natural freshness—the exhilaration due to a sense of perfect cleanliness—the glow and delight of a healthy stimulating influence.

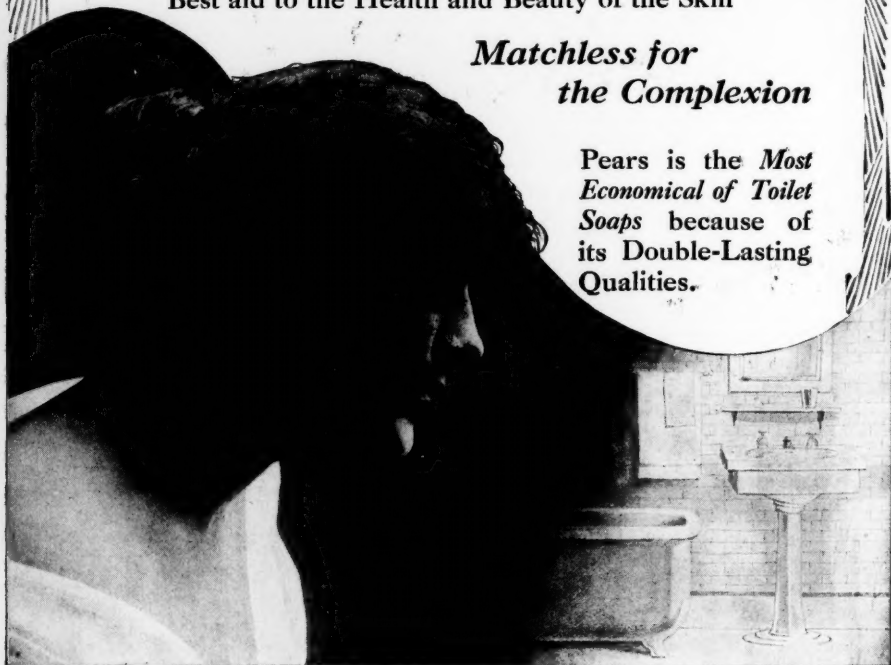
Pears is composed entirely of natural saponaceous ingredients of the highest emollient and detergent properties. It is so daintily soothing and softening to the skin surface, and it promotes in a pre-eminent degree that natural beauty of complexion which is universally admired.

Pears' Soap

Best aid to the Health and Beauty of the Skin

*Matchless for
the Complexion*

Pears is the *Most Economical of Toilet Soaps* because of its *Double-Lasting Qualities.*



All rights secured.

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEAR'S OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.



Harry Lauder singing to himself

"They adore me when I've got my trousers on, but they love me in my kilt."
"Rob Roy MacIntosh"—Victor Record No. 70004.

When the famous Scotch comedian wants to "hear himself as ithers hear him", he becomes his own audience of one before the Victrola.

And he hears himself just as his vast audiences hear him all over the world, just as thousands hear him on the Victor in their own homes, just as you too can hear him.

Hearing Harry Lauder on the Victrola is really hearing him in person—his delightful droll Scottish dialect and humorous personality are all there in Victor Records, and Lauder himself has pronounced them "simply 'to the life'".

Any Victor dealer in any city in the world will gladly play any of the 39 Lauder records, or Victor Records by such other well-known artists as Christie MacDonald, Blanche Ring, Elsie Janis, Al Jolson, Montgomery & Stone, Nat Wills, Nora Bayes, Robert Hilliard, George M. Cohan.

There are Victors and Victrolas in great variety of styles from \$10 to \$200.

Victor Talking Machine Co., Camden, N. J., U. S. A.

Berliner Gramophone Co., Montreal, Canadian Distributors



New Victor Records demonstrated at all dealers on the 28th of each month

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.

One Day's Pay One Man's Work \$28.⁵⁰ With This

made by Jos. Hancock, Lamoni, Iowa. Scheerer, Montana, made \$22.35 in 5 hours. Miller, Iowa, Made \$13.65 in one afternoon. **We have proof of this** and hundreds of similar reports. No matter who you are or where you live, here's your chance to double your present salary or income, working during spare time or permanently as a **one minute photographer**. **No experience needed**. A new, live business of big cash profits. You can work at home or travel, enjoy the healthful, outdoor work and become independent in your own business. Invest one cent for a postal—ask us for proof of what others are doing—of what you can earn with a

Mandel Post Card Machine

A portable post card gallery. Takes, finishes and delivers photo post cards and buttons in a minute's time—makes five different styles of pictures in 3 sizes. **No plates, films or darkness**. One minute pictures sell like wildfire. Everybody buys. Fences, fairs, carnivals, busy corners, small towns and large cities—**Big Money Everywhere**.

This Picture-Taking Outfit

gives you a complete, ready-made business that produces profits for you at once. You can make 100 to 200 sales a day, easy. Each sale brings \$5 to the clear profit. Small capital. Sale of first supplies brings back practically your entire investment. Write at once for full particulars FREE.

The Chicago Ferrotyp Co.
208 Ferrotyp Bldg., Chicago or
Dept. 208 Public Bldg., New York



Build Your Own Boat



\$2 to \$20 Buys
Complete Patterns
and Instructions.

Save two-thirds boat builder's price. We send complete parts—all shape and fitted—ready to put together. Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back. Assemble your boat now—be ready for spring. Only \$13.90 for complete knock-down frame of 23 ft. Motor Boat—12 passengers—speed 9 1/2 to 14 miles an hour. This includes full-sized patterns to finish by.

Write for Brooks Boat Book illustrating row boats, canoes, sail and motor boats, cruisers, that you can build. Also new "V" bottom boats. Address: **BROOKS MFG. CO., 5204 Rust Ave., Saginaw, Mich.**



SALESMEN

Earn Larger Salaries Than Any Other Class of Men

We will teach you to be a high grade salesman, in eight weeks by mail and assure you definite propositions from a large number of reliable firms offering opportunities to earn good wages while you are learning. No former experience required. Write today for particulars, list of hundreds of good openings and testimonials from hundreds of our students now earning \$100 to \$500 a month. Address nearest office.

Dept. 17 **NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASS'N.**
Chicago Kansas City New York San Francisco



Send for TRIAL BOTTLE 20¢

You have never seen anything like this before

The fragrance of thousands of blossoms in a vital 2 inches high. The most exquisite perfume science ever produced. Not diluted with alcohol.

Rieger's Flower Drops

\$1.50 at dealers or by mail. Send check, stamps, money order. 3 odors: Lily of the Valley, Rose, Violet. Money back if not pleased. Send 80c silver or stamps for miniature bottle with long glass stopper. Please mention name of dealer. Address **Paul Rieger, 105 1st St., San Francisco**
Maker of High Grade Perfumes
Paris New York San Francisco

EXACT SIZE REGULAR BOTTLE

LEARN RAG TIME



Let me teach YOU Ragtime Pianos
Playing by mail. You learn quickly—easily in 20 lessons.
Even if you can't play a note I'll teach you to play **any piece in Real Ragtime**
"Money-back" Guarantee
Write me now for special low terms and testimonials from hundreds of happy students.
Axel Christensen (Czar of Rag-Time) Director
Christensen School of Popular Music
862 Christensen Bldg., CHICAGO, ILL.



We Ship on Approval

without a cent deposit, prepay the freight and allow **10 DAYS FREE TRIAL** on every bicycle. **IT ONLY COSTS** one cent to learn our unheard of prices and marvelous offers on highest grade 1914 models.

FACTORY PRICES

Do not buy a bicycle or a pair of tires from any one at any price until you write for our new large Art Catalog and learn our wonderful proposition on the first sample bicycle going to your town.

RIDER AGENTS

everywhere are making big money exhibiting and selling our bicycles. We sell cheaper than any other factory.

TIRES, Coaster-Brake rear wheels, lamps, repairs and sundries at half normal prices. Do Not Wait write for our latest special offer on "Chicago" bicycle.

MEAD CYCLE CO. Dept. D-10 CHICAGO

\$4 A MONTH BUYS THIS VISIBLE OLIVER TYPEWRITER



Nothing Down—Free Trial. Less than Agents' Prices. Shipped on approval. If you want to keep it, send us \$4 a month. Our booklet is worth sending for, because it tells you how to save \$4.50. **IT'S FREE.**

TYPEWRITERS DISTRIBUTING SYNDICATE
166 N-72 N. Michigan Boulevard, Chicago (198)

SHORTHAND IN 30 DAYS

Boyd Syllabic System—written with only nine characters. No "positions"—no "inlet lines"—no "shading"—no "word-signs"—no "bold notes." Speedy, practical system that can be learned in 30 days of home study, utilizing spare time. For full descriptive matter, free, address, Chicago Correspondence Schools, 975 Chicago Opera House Block, Chicago, Ill.

Vol. XIX

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

No. 1

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

CONTENTS

FOR - APRIL - 1914

Cover Design	H. W. Dizler	
For Geraldine's Career—A Novelette Illustrated by E. A. Furman.	Anne O'Hagan	1
On Trade-Marks—A Sermon	Edwin L. Sabin	48
The Benefit Concert—A Story Illustrated by E. C. Caswell.	Marion Short	51
Madame Demonnet's Jewels—A Story Illustrated by R. Van Buren.	Virginia Middleton	61
On the Credit Side—A Nautical Ballad Illustrated by H. Mayer.	Wallace Irwin	77
The Way of a Maid—A Story Illustrated by G. C. Pugsley.	Leigh Gordon Giltner	79
A Quiet Week-End—A Story Illustrated by Harold Thomas Denison.	Kate Jordan	87
The Better Baby—A Story Illustrated by Clarence Rowe.	Edwin L. Sabin	96
I Love My Love—A Poem	Isabel Ecclestone Mackay	102
Here Come the Heirs—A Story Illustrated by Victor Perard.	Holman F. Day	103
"Sublime Sweet Evening Star"—A Poem	Rheem Douglas	117
The Pearl and the Oyster—A Little Fact Story	Prudence Rawson	118
Confessors—A Story Illustrated by N. W. Truslow.	Edward Boltwood	121
In a Second-hand Store—A Poem	Jeannie Pendleton Ewing	128
The Man Inside—A Serial (Conclusion) Illustrated by Robert A. Graef.	Natalie Sumner Lincoln	129
Aunt Hepsey's Heathen—A Story Illustrated by R. Emmett Owen.	Winifred Arnold	153
The Fountain of Youth—A Story Illustrated by Laura E. Foster.	Hildegard Lavender	161
The Quest—A Poem	Martha Haskell Clark	169
The Country Store—Part II. Illustrated by R. Emmett Owen.	Eugene Wood	170
Attar of Roses—A Poem	Arthur Wallace Peach	176
Making "Age" Attractive Illustrated with Photographs.	Doctor Lillian Whitney	177

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$1.50

SINGLE COPIES 15 CENTS

Monthly Publication Issued by SMITH PUBLISHING HOUSE, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
 ORMOND G. SMITH, President, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City; GEORGE C. SMITH, Secretary and Treasurer,
 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
 Copyright, 1914, by SMITH PUBLISHING HOUSE, in the United States and Great Britain. All Rights Reserved.
 Publishers everywhere are cautioned against using any of the contents of this Magazine either wholly or in part.
 Entered as Second-class Matter, at the New York Post Office, according to an Act of
 Congress, March 3, 1879, by SMITH PUBLISHING HOUSE.
 WARNING—Do not subscribe through agents unknown to you personally. Complaints
 reach us daily from victims of such swindlers.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Agents & Help Wanted

FREE ILLUSTRATED BOOK tells of about 300,000 protected positions in U. S. service. Thousands of vacancies every year. There is a big chance here for you, sure and generous pay, lifetime employment. Just ask for booklet S 23. No obligation. Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

GOVERNMENT positions pay big money. Get prepared for "exams" by former U. S. Civil Service Examiner. Free booklet. Patterson Civil Service School, Box Y, Rochester, N. Y.

AGENTS—Handkerchiefs, Dress Goods, Carleton made \$8.00 one afternoon; Mrs. Bosworth \$25.00 in two days. Free Samples. Credit. Stamp brings particulars. Freeport Mfg. Company, 45 Main St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

MEN OF IDEAS and inventive ability should write for new "Lists of Needed Inventions." Patent Buyers and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Advice Free. Randolph & Co., Patent Attorneys, Dept. 46, Washington, D. C.

BE YOUR OWN BOSS—I MADE \$200.00 weekly the first year with a small Mail Order Business. Began with \$5.00. Any intelligent person may do the work. Send for free booklet. Tells how. Heacock, 5205, Lockport, New York.

WILL Pay Reliable Man or Woman \$12.50 to distribute 100 Free pkgs. Perfumed Borax Soap Powder among friends. No money required. R. Ward Company, 24 Institute Pl., Chicago.

MEN—WOMEN—Get Government Jobs, \$85 to \$150 month. Spring Examinations everywhere. Full description free. Franklin Institute, Dept. D 7, Rochester, N. Y.

AGENTS WANTED: best paying agency proposition in U. S.; assures you \$1500 yearly; inexperienced taught how to make \$75 to \$200 monthly; let us show you. Novelty Cutlery Co., 15 Bar St., Canton, O.

AGENTS: SNAPPY HOUSEHOLD LINE ON EARTH. Red hot sellers, steady repeaters. Over 150 different articles. Goods guaranteed. 100% profit. Write quick—Hurry. E. M. Feltman, Sales Manager, 6721 Sycamore Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

75% COMMISSIONS. Prices, etc., open for not more than 2 Salespeople. No experience. We train you. Work in your own town. Write quick Tolax Chemical Company, Utica, N. Y.

\$42.50 IN 8 Hours. Engrosser made this with his Plateless Daydark. You can earn \$75 weekly without experience, making post card photos at fairs, houses, on streets. 3 finished pictures a minute the Daydark way. Shipped prepaid on 10 days free trial. Write for Free catalog and sample today. Daydark Specialty Co., Dept. F, St. Louis, Mo.

Telegraphy

Telegraphy—Wire and Wireless and Railway Accounting taught. Graduates assisted. Catalog free. Dodge's Institute, Owen St., Valparaiso, Ind.

Motion Picture Plays

WRITE Moving Picture Plays: \$50 each; all or spare time; correspondence course unnecessary; details free. Atlas Publishing Co., 310, Cincinnati, O.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS wanted. You can write them. We teach you by mail. No experience needed. Big demand, good pay. Details free. Associated Motion Picture Schools, 619 Sheridan Road, Chicago.

I absolutely guarantee at least \$10 for first photo-play you write after taking my lessons. Special reason for this startling offer; particulars free. Elbert Moore, Box 772, I. P., P. O., Chicago.

Patents and Lawyers

PATENTS SECURED OR FEE returned. Send sketch for free report as to patentability. Guide Book and What to Invent, with valuable List of Inventions Wanted, sent free. One Million Dollars offered for one invention. Patents secured by us advertised free in World's Progress, sample free. Victor J. Evans & Co., Washington, D. C.

PATENTS, TRADE-MARKS AND Copyrights. Our hand book on patents will be sent free on request. All patents secured through us are described without cost to the patentee in the Scientific American. Munn & Co., Patent Attorneys, 373 Broadway, New York. Washington Office, 625 F Street, Washington, D. C.

IDEAS WANTED—Manufacturers are writing for patents procured through me. 3 books with list 300 inventions wanted sent free. Advice free. I get patent or no fee. R. B. Owen, 39 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C.

U. S. and Foreign Patents and Trade Marks. Free Book and opinion as to patentability. Joshua R. H. Potts, Patent Lawyer, 805 G St., Washington. 8 Dearborn St., Chicago; 929 Chestnut St., Philadelphia.

PATENTS THAT PROTECT AND PAY. Advice and books free. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Send sketch or model for free search. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

Cameras

HAVE YOU A CAMERA? WRITE FOR SAMPLES of my magazine, American Photography and Popular Photography, which tell you how to make better pictures and earn money. F. R. Fraprie, 610 Pope Building, Boston, Mass.

Coins, Stamps, Etc.

\$2. to \$600. paid for hundreds of old coins dated before 1855. Send 10c at once for New Illustrated Coin Value Book, 4x7, showing prices we guarantee to pay. Get posted. Clarke & Co., Coin Dealers, Box 132, Le Roy, N. Y.

Games & Entertainment

PLAYS, Vaudeville Sketches, Monologues, Dialogues, Speakers, Minstrel Material, Jokes, Recitations, Tableaux, Drills, Entertainments. Make Up Goods. Large Catalog Free. T. S. Denison & Co., Dept. 18, Chicago.

Music and Song Poems

SONG POEMS WANTED: I've paid writers thousands in royalties. Send me samples of your work for free criticism, or write for valuable Free Booklet and most liberal, legitimate proposition offered. Absolute protection. Est. 16 years. Numerous successes. John T. Hall, Pres., 10 Columbus Circle, New York.

SONG POEMS WANTED: Money in successful songs. Send us your poems for examination. We revise, write the music, pay for and secure copyright in your name and pay 50% Royalty on all copies we sell. Particulars, terms and book "How Music Makes Money" Free. C. L. Parlee Co., 809 Astor Theatre Building, New York.

Business Opportunities

FREE FOR SIX MONTHS.—My Special offer to introduce my magazine "Investing for Profit." It is worth \$10 a copy to anyone who has been getting poorer while the rich, richer. It demonstrates the real earning power of money, and shows how anyone, no matter how poor, can acquire riches. Investing for Profit is the only progressive financial journal published. It shows how \$100 grows to \$2,200. Write Now and I'll send it six months free. H. L. Barber, 408, 20 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago.

1000 WAYS AND SECRETS to make money sent for 25 cents. Postpaid. J. F. Sheridan, 417 East 151st Street, New York, N. Y.

Miscellaneous

TIE HAIR LUXURIANT without Drugs. 1914 Copyright Edition 25 cents silver. Elmer Holm, 213 Howard St., Detroit.

SEX Secrets and Marriage Guide for married or to be married. 276 pages of secrets you want to know. Price 50c Postpaid. The Famous Co., 417 East 151st St., New York, N. Y.



Short-Story Writing

A course of forty lessons in the history, form, structure, and writing of the Short-Story, taught by Dr. J. B. Egan, Editor Lippincott's Magazine. Over one hundred Home Study Courses under Professors at Harvard, Brown, Cornell and leading colleges.

250 page catalog free. Write to-day.

The Home Correspondence School

Dept. 264, Springfield, Mass.

CLASSIFIED CIRCULATION, 2,000,000, ABOUT 8,000,000 READERS. A postal to each reader would cost \$80,000.00. You can reach them for \$6.00 a line through this section. Write for Rate Card. Smith's Magazine, 79 Seventh Ave., New York City.

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 19

APRIL, 1914

NUMBER 1

For Geraldine's Career

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "The Awakening of Romola," "Deep Unto Deep," "The Affair at Fenfield," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. A. FURMAN

CHAPTER I.

I STOOD in the street before the house, the friendly crowd of neighbors surging about me, wrapping my night-gowned figure with additional shawls and comforters, and watched the destruction of my home proceed. The flames were roaring now through the lower stories of the ancient wooden pile, and out of the upper windows the smoke poured in black, acrid clouds. I had been dragged from a smoke-drugged stupor, and even yet, in the chill air of the April midnight, my faculties were benumbed. I watched the ineffective streams of water playing over the walls of the house with but little realization of what was happening. Then suddenly, all at once, a terrifying recollection returned to me.

"Geraldine! Geraldine!" I cried frantically. "Oh, where is Geraldine? Geraldine——"

Mrs. Tyson from next door put her motherly hand on my shoulder.

"Why, Amy," she crooned, "don't you remember? Geraldine went with your pa an' ma to Boston Tuesday——"

"Jerry! Jerry! Jerry!" I shrieked again, breaking from her kindly grasp. "Oh, will nobody do anything? Jerry's at home—she came back last night—she's in her room in the L—— Will nobody—— Oh, let me go, let me go!"

For some one was trying to restrain me as I started to break through the line the firemen had drawn about the yard.

They held me back firmly, and I struggled as one struggles in a nightmare, straining muscles, overcharging arteries, against the impossible. I gasped my prayers to be allowed to try to rescue my sister, I offered fantastic rewards to whomever would perform the service for me. But the friendly clamor about me was all to the effect that I was probably mistaken; that Geraldine had gone away two days before with our parents; that even if she were in the house, it was hopeless to try to rescue her. And then, through the maddening inaction, the futile argument as to Geraldine's whereabouts, the cruel restraint of the hands laid upon me, there came rushing Dirkman Kidder. I spied him as he cleft a rough way through the crowd.

"Oh, Dirk, Dirk!" I called, managing to wrench myself free of the detaining hands. "Geraldine is inside! Jerry came home last night! They won't let me—— She's in her room! Oh, Dirk, Dirk!" And I promptly collapsed upon his shoulder.

When I recovered consciousness, I was lying on the fresh spring grass in Mrs. Tyson's front yard, my face upturned to the incredible, high, white tranquillity of the moon. All my life,

the sensation of that moment has remained with me. To see, above the black and lurid confusion, a thing so marvelously still, so gloriously, austere remote and beautiful—it was a miracle, and a miracle strangely comforting and calming. Then I moved my head, tried to raise myself upon my elbow, and found the exertion too great. One of the Tyson girls was bending over me on the second, obliterating the silver majesty on high, and pouring brandy between my lips. I sputtered, choked, and demanded, between gasps: "Geraldine?"

"It's all right. Dirk got her out," Florence Tyson assured me, and her voice was heavenly music in my ears, and her plain face transfigured with celestial light. "She wasn't even overcome with the smoke as you were, poor dear! You see, the main part of the house must have been smoldering a long time before the flames burst, but the L didn't catch until after the fire was blazing in the main part. So Jerry's all right. She's gone to bed at the Mayburys'."

"Dirk?" I questioned her weakly.

"A little singed," she replied, smiling. "He's lost an ambrosial lock or two, and half an eyebrow. But he's all right. Now you're to come in to bed. Mother's got one ready for you. The firemen have the fire under control, and there's no sense in any more excitement."

"Father and mother?" I suggested.

"Dirk has telephoned them; they'll be down on the early train to-morrow."

Then I permitted myself to be put to bed in the room Mrs. Tyson had got ready for me by the simple and hospitable process of moving her own belongings from it. To my own astonishment, I soon fell asleep and forgot for the time to think upon what the destruction of the house would mean to our family, already too poor for comfort. If I thought of anything, as the drowsiness of sleep began to overtake me, it was of little Jerry, asleep in the Mayburys' across the street, and of Dirk. I remember that I told myself it was quite impossible now to refuse

to marry Dirk, if he continued to want to marry me. The old objection that he was some years distant from the ability to support a wife would, it seemed to my slumberous and grateful mind, have to give way to the fact that he had saved my young sister's life.

Our house had stood for many generations on the main street of Salesport, decorously distant from the region that we were accustomed to call, somewhat too grandiloquently, "the business section." The fact that we owned it had robbed poverty of much of its oppression. We used to say, mother and I, that when father's practice reached the absolutely vanishing point toward which it had long been tending, we could let rooms; though I am sure I do not know to whom we expected to let them, Salesport being a town of notoriously home-owning proclivities. We used also to assure ourselves, on the days when the income seemed smallest, that "if the worst came to the worst," we could raise enough vegetables in the gardens back of the house to sustain life; and with a roof over our heads, sufficient nourishment for our stomachs, and plenty of love in our hearts, what more could we ask?

Such was the simple creed in which mother had raised me. I used sometimes to think that I would not find it impossible to ask more if I gave rein to my imagination—new rugs for the living room, for example; a complete set of china, matched, uncracked, un-nicked; a few new dresses that did not have their origin in our Philadelphia cousin's cast-off clothing. I thought I should like travel, study, luxurious hotels, theaters, strange people—Oh, by allowing my fancy to range, I could think of numerous things that I could be taught to ask beyond a roof, moderately waterproof, above my head, food for my body, and the domestic affections for my spiritual nourishment!

Sometimes, when I voiced these heresies to mother, she would sigh, and sometimes she would smile. And very often she would answer: "Well, perhaps John will make a great fortune



for us, or Jerry's fingers will play us all into affluence."

I had more faith in Geraldine's fingers than I had in John's practice. John was entirely the son of his father and mother—an impractical person with high ideals rather than material ambitions, a youth who accepted the theory that a roof, a due amount of food, labor, and love, constituted all that a man could justly demand in the world. Jerry, flashing her brilliant, pliant, wonderful young fingers up and down the scales, had not yet reached an age when a definite philosophy of life could be demanded of her. But in so far as her instinctive acts forecast her later philosophy, I felt considerably greater hope of her than of John.

However, whatever the future, the present seemed dark enough on the April morning when I looked across the lawn dividing the Tyson place from ours, and marked the charred remnants of our home.

"Jerry! Jerry! Jerry!"
I shrieked again. "Oh, will nobody do anything? Will nobody— Oh, let me go, let me go!"

"It's awful, isn't it, Amy?" sighed Mrs. Tyson, coming to the window beside me, and viewing the desolation. "I do hope your pa has kept the insurance up. When Mr. Tyson died—" And she rambled off into a familiar tale of her late husband's neglect to pay his life-insurance premium, and of the disastrous effect of his thoughtlessness upon his heirs.

I didn't listen, because I knew the story by heart, and also because of the sudden constriction of fear in my throat. It would be so exactly like father to have neglected the insurance! Indeed,

from the moment when the possibility was suggested to me, I was sure beyond doubt that he had neglected it, and that the charred timbers upon which I was looking represented a total loss.

Jerry came out of the Mayburys' as I stood staring at the ruins and savoring, in anticipation, the taste of a coming poverty worse than any I had known. Her bright head shone in the April sunlight—Jerry's hair is of that particularly glorious red that makes all other colors, even gold, seem dead and dull. She was then a long-legged, thin sixteen, but there was the promise of coming grace in her adolescent angularity. She wore a leaf-green dress that I recognized as one of the youngest Maybury girl's. It was becoming to Jerry, and I thought, with proprietary pride, that the child always managed to look well. She came into the Tysons' hall and called me; her voice in speaking was lovely—round, rich, thrilling, with cadences and trills most musical.

When I came out of the dining room to meet her, her eyes were shining with excitement.

"Oh, Amy!" she cried ecstatically. "Isn't it heavenly? Just think of being rid of that old ark! Now we can build a comfortable modern house, can't we?"

"With what?" I demanded, Mrs. Tyson's gloomy suggestion in mind.

"Why, with the insurance. The Mayburys were talking of it at breakfast. Their house only cost eight thousand dollars, and it's ten times more comfortable than ours. Why, Amy!" She turned upon me sharply. "Why do you look like that? You don't think—Oh, it isn't possible that father could have been so careless?" She had read the meaning of my expression.

"Of course, we can't tell until he comes down," I replied. "But—well, there's no use denying it would be just the sort of thing to happen in our family."

"Just like our family! You mean it would be just like father!" retorted Geraldine with an asperity unbecoming her years. "It wouldn't be like me

—I have too much sense for such a stupid piece of business! And it wouldn't be like you, A; you have too much conscience. But father!" She shrugged her thin young shoulders beneath her borrowed frock and dismissed the subject.

"The furniture insurance has been kept up, anyway," she informed me after a second's sullen pause. "Mother did that—I hounded her into it after the Deweys' house went. I couldn't bear to think of the piano being gone. I shall be glad to get a new one," she added placidly. "That was always a tin-pan sort of thing. I don't suppose Cousin Judith would have sent it otherwise."

"But if everything has gone to smash," I said, trying to prepare her mind for disagreeable possibilities, "they may not be able to replace your piano right away."

She turned her head toward me and looked her unmitigated astonishment. "But, A," she informed me, "the piano represents my career—I've got to have a piano! Besides"—her eyes darkened ominously—"the piano is *mine*. Cousin Judith gave it to *me*!"

And then we saw our parents walking rapidly up the street, and we ran through the hall and out on to the sidewalk to greet them. Mother caught us both tightly to her bosom. Father patted our shoulders tremulously, after he had looked for signs of injury on our faces.

"My darlings, safe!" cried mother.

"How did it start?" asked father.

"Have you kept the insurance up?" demanded Geraldine.

It was Geraldine who received the first reply. Mother and father turned blanching faces upon each other. The poor, impractical babes in the wood had not put the question to each other before!

"Mary, did you— Why, when was it due?" cried father resentfully, boisterously, as if by an angry noise he could alter the disagreeable fact and make it flee, acknowledging itself falsehood.

"In February," faltered mother.

"Why, John, don't you remember? You were going to take the Lyons' bill for that and your life-insurance premium."

Father drooped his gray head. Mother's large, anxious eyes turned loyally from the sight of his self-reproachful misery, but Geraldine's sharp, accusing regard never wavered.

"Well, thank Heaven you managed the furniture insurance yourself, mother!" she said at last, with something hard and contemptuous on her fresh lips. "If only you had managed the whole thing!"

Mother rebuked her; mother never let us forget what was due to our father. But he, more just, said: "Don't scold the child, Mary. She's quite right. I— Oh, it's unbelievable, it's preposterous, that a man could neglect such a thing!"

"I don't think so," cried mother warmly. "Why, the house has stood for two hundred years without catching fire—why on earth should you expect it to catch now? In this way? Unexpectedly, out of the clear sky?" Mother spoke with indignation, as if the conflagration had shown very bad and unusual manners in not sending out announcements of its intentions two weeks in advance. And then she added her familiar consolation: "Anyway, we're all together. We've got one another."

"And there's that little cottage down on Water Street," said father, cheerful immediately under her soothing. "We can go into that for the present. Those Czernas haven't paid any rent for three months, anyway, and I have given them notice to quit."

"Go into the Water Street cottage?" cried Jerry, shrill for once in her life, and italicizing all her words. "Into the cottage you rented to those immigrants?" Stern accusation blazed from her brown eyes.

Father and mother both seemed to apologize for the necessity. And, somehow, though investigation revealed the fact that it was Geraldine's candle, set unguarded upon a shelf in the bathroom where the curtains might

reach it, that had conspired with a change in the wind to set our home afire, the whole family was in the attitude of apologizing to her for the unpleasant privations that she would be forced to undergo as a result of our temporary homelessness. The house, she told us firmly, should have been wired for electricity long ago.

It was, I suppose, characteristic of the general improvidence and impracticality of the family, that my parents should rejoice, a week later, when Dirkman Kidder and I walked into the Tysons' and announced that we were engaged to be married. Dirk had proposed to me that afternoon down at the cove. There are times still, when the wind is from the east, and brings with it briny odors of waves and wet sand and driftwood rotting to its salty death, that I can relive the whole foolish, young scene—Dirk with his singed eyebrows and his burned forelock, I with my toil-grimed hands.

He had come to the Water Street cottage, which I was trying to restore to the Salesport standard of cleanliness before we should move in, and had commanded me, with all the lordliness of twenty-three, to give up work and to come walk with him. I was glad enough to obey. The Czerna tribe had left the cottage in an indescribable condition, and I was immersed in such homely labors as kalsomining, painting, and scrubbing. I washed my face in the iron sink behind the kitchen door, called to the plumbers who were installing a bathroom on the floor above—the sole recognition of any social differences between the Czernas and the Alcotts—put on my hat, and went to walk with Dirk.

The sky was lightly overcast with gray; a moist wind blew in from the sea beyond the line of the islands that fringe the Salesport harbor and shut it in from the great breakers. I can close my eyes now and see the whole scene again—the shingled sand of the beach rolling back to the craggy granite, the rocks pricked with the green of hardy, stunted trees, and behind them the softer, more shimmering color of the

early leaves in the woods that, on our favored coast, come down to meet the sea with only the little wall of rough-toothed rocks between. Ever since we were children and had first gone wading and fishing and botanizing together, Dirk and I had known this particular indentation of the shore, where an arm of the bay crept far inland, between the sands and the scrub-grown rocks, and lost itself in a sluggish tide creek in the meadows back of Salesport.

When we had walked to the cove on this particular April afternoon, we sat silent for a while. I was resting mind and body. My muscles were relaxed after the unaccustomed labors of the day; my thoughts gave up for the time the harassing discussion of what the Alcott family was going to do. I ceased to ask myself if there was no way in which the threatened withdrawal of John, now a junior, from Johns Hopkins could be averted. I ceased to ask myself how Geraldine's piano lessons were to be continued. I loafed, basking in the soft air, and basking, too, in the sense of Dirk's admiration and affection.

"Well, A," he said, after a while—he had called me "A" since our school days, when all my exercises were signed with that noncommittal initial—"well, A, when do you think you'll marry me?"

It was not an unprecedented query. Dirk had begun telling me that he was in love with me when he had come home from Princeton two years before. The statement had never made any difference in the affectionate intimacy in which we passed the periods between his declarations—Dirk was not addicted to the more disconcerting manifestations of ardor. In fact, he had always made his assertion as to his own feelings, and asked for an expression of mine, with a calm, matter-of-fact, take-it-for-granted air of finality that robbed the situation of seriousness. Sometimes, when I was moved to laughter at his preposterous attitude, he grew for a moment serious, and there were intimations of passionate possibilities in his blue eyes.

But to-day, when he asked the absurd question, instead of laughing, I felt an inclination to tears. For the first time in my twenty-two years I wanted to be married—Heaven forgive me if the desire was rather for a refuge than for a mate! But I was so worn with the struggle to live—genteelly, as be seemed the Alcotts—on next-to-nothing a year! I was so tired of the indolent, slipshod methods of my father, who had allowed an originally good practice to drift from him! I was even tired of the beautiful idealism of my mother with her "since-we-have-one-another, what does bread and meat matter?" philosophy.

It would be an exquisite relief to drop the burden of thought for my household, and to watch some strong, competent person pick it up—for my sake! It would be the balm of perfect peace to know that never again would I be obliged to consider how John could struggle through the medical school, or how Geraldine could be well trained, or father's bills collected, or mother's wardrobe renewed. But Dirk was no richer than I, and he was very little older. The woman who married him must take his making on her shoulders along with whatever load she already bore. I knew that well enough—and yet—and yet—it was very sweet, druggingly, languorously sweet—to feel love infolding one!

"When do you expect to be able to support a wife?" I replied crudely, mercenarily, but impersonally, to Dirk's question, when I had shaken off the moment's yearning for a cessation of worry in his arms. He looked up at me quickly, sharply, from a stick he was whittling. His blue eyes darkened, glowed.

"Amy!" he cried. "Amy, do you mean—"

"I don't mean anything," I told him hastily, a little frightened by the atmosphere my words had evoked about us, as the magicians waving hands evoke a thunderous darkness in the theaters. "Except to call your attention to the fact that you aren't really

playing fair in asking a woman to marry you."

"I'll be admitted to the bar next fall," he protested; he was reading law, in somewhat desultory fashion, I thought, in his uncle's Boston office.

"You've told me a dozen times that you had no bent at all toward the law," I reminded him.

"That's true enough. But I don't find that I have a very strong bent toward any form of labor yet. But all that I need, A, to make me a hard-working, prosperous citizen, is to have you care for me. I could work as hard as the next fellow if I had anything—any one—to work for! Ah, Amy—you do care a little, don't you?"

His voice was wheedling, caressing, irresistible. He had come close to my side, and a strange weakness shook me; he caught my hand, and I could feel the throbbing of his pulses, and my own began to beat crazily in unison with his.

"Oh, Dirk, let me go!" I whispered, struggling to withdraw my hand. But he held it fast.

"I'll never let you go!" he answered, low-toned, passionate, compelling, a man—or so it seemed to me—and no longer the boy who had been my playmate for so many years. Well—I was strangely content to have it so. My head sank back upon his shoulder. He kissed me, and it seemed to me that the gates of paradise swung open before us.

By and by, when we came back to earth again, we talked—practically, I think we called it! We planned how Dirk was to work hard, was to read diligently, was to be admitted to practice at the earliest possible moment, was to command such a good position in his uncle's office that at the end of a year and a half we could be married. He told me how little we could live upon, and I told him that we could live on even less than that little. And then, through the late afternoon, which persisted softly gray and was shot with no sunset gleams, we went back to the Tysons', where father and mother were quartered until the Water Street cot-

tage should be made habitable, and we told our news.

As I said, it was characteristic of our hopelessly impractical way of looking at things that both my parents were as happy as if I had come telling some tale of worldly triumph. They both liked Dirk—as much, I think, because they had known his forbears as for his own lazy, honest, lovable sake. And mother said that she thought the happiest marriages were those for which the young people had had to work and wait; and she prattled very sweetly about the beauty of the engaged period of a girl's life. And father opined that we would be as happy as he and mother had been, and he was sure that there could be no better happiness than that. And then he went back to his game of solitaire, which our tidings had interrupted.

Jerry, strolling in from the Mayburys', in whose hospitable house she was domiciled, and looking very nearly pretty in a brown wool frock made over for her from one of the youngest Maybury girl's, heard the news with less enthusiasm than my parents. She opened her fresh young lips upon some startled exclamation, changed it into a whistle, came and sat on the arm of my chair, kissed me under the ear, and told us merrily that she resented the affair.

"You know I can't get along without A, Dirk," she informed my lover.

"Don't blame you," answered Dirk. "Feel that way about her myself. However—I'll let you share her—a little!"

"And besides," she continued, looking with merry impertinence at him, "I had half intended to marry you myself."

I laughed at the thought of the long-legged little girl's intending anything in a matrimonial line; mother rebuked her, with a blush for her flippancy; and Dirk reddened. He was only a boy, and he seemed singularly boyish under her gay attack.

"However, I suppose it's all right if you're going to be in the family," pursued Miss Geraldine. She shot a long, unformed, girlish arm out at him. "I'm

glad!" she concluded seriously, as he took her hand and shook it.

And then she relieved the strain of too long a stretch of sentiment by inquiring how soon the cottage would be in readiness for father's shingle on its front door and her new piano in the front room. I gave the information a little heavily—I kept wishing that the five hundred dollars that was to be spent out of the scant furniture insurance might have gone to John in Baltimore. Poor John! He had accepted the disagreeable situation gallantly enough.

chintz cover for it myself, and it looked very fresh and pretty in the room whose uneven walls I had kalsomined a misty bluish-gray. "But, after all, A, medicine is a profession—it isn't a gift. It can be pursued under difficulties—especially by a man. Now music"—she looked dreamily out through the little dormer window upon the leaves of an apple tree burgeoning in the yard—"music is different."

Downstairs I heard Dirk's whistle. He had entered the house with easy informality. I answered the signal.



Some of our poor foreign neighbors, lolling on their fences, smiled their understanding, swarthy smiles, and shrugged their shoulders over the dullness of the young in America.

I forget now what various and uncongenial tasks he found to do in order that he might not be obliged to give up his studies. But I remember what Jerry said when I bemoaned his necessities somewhat.

"Of course, it's disagreeable for John," she said. She was perched on the edge of her bed in the tiny room under the eaves of the cottage. The bed had been a contribution from one of father's few remaining patients of means—a lady who was discarding brass and iron in favor of mahogany four-posters at the dictation of a new æsthetic sense; I had enameled the white frame, and had made the bright

"Come on for a walk, A," he called to me.

"Wait half an hour, and I will," I replied. "I've got the dishes to do."

"Come now, please. I have something to tell you."

"Won't it be true at the end of half an hour?" I demanded as I ran down to the kitchen, catching a long apron from a hook in my own cubby-hole, as I ran.

"Maybe not!" he retorted. "Man is a faithless animal, and it may be that I shall not love you in half an hour." He stood at the foot of the stairs and caught me and kissed me as I ran down.

"Was that all you had to tell?" I scoffed.

"No—there's something else. But that's the most important. Come on. Take off that pinafore, or whatever you call it, put on your hat, and come."

I protested that I could do nothing of the sort. I had to do the dinner dishes. In Salesport we dined plebeianly in the middle of the day and supped at night—or at any rate we did on Water Street.

"Why can't Jerry do the dishes?" he grumbled.

I laughed. "You dare to suggest dishes to an up-and-coming young pianist!" I advised him. "Why, stupid, don't you know that a 'performer' must consider her hands almost beyond everything else on the footstool? Have you never read of Paderewski's care of his hands? Why, I think each finger is specially and separately insured!"

"Well, Geraldine isn't quite in his class yet, is she? I must say, A, that I think it a terrible mistake for you and your mother to let the child impose upon you all so! She'll grow up a selfish, useless, little creature."

"Nonsense!" I answered hurriedly, the more vehemently, perhaps, because he voiced an occasional dread of my own. "Nonsense! She'll be more useful than twenty dishwashers—and selfishness isn't a matter of occupation."

I hurried past him to the kitchen and wrought diligently among the soapy, steaming pans, and the soiled dishes. In the division of labor that had followed upon the dismissal of the one servant we had allowed ourselves on Main Street, I had taken over the daily housework, and mother the sewing and mending. A woman came twice a week for the laundry work and the heavy cleaning. I trembled sometimes to think how shortly even that assistance might be taken from us. It was certain that new patients of the paying class had not begun to follow our removal into these quarters. Father had more time than ever to play his solitaire and read his French philosophers!

When I had thrown the last dish hastily into its pantry and had hung

the dish towels on their rods, I washed my hands, doffed my gingham apron, and joined Dirk, moodily pacing the front hall. As usual, our walk was in the direction of the cove. The fresh beauty of the May day, the sense of his nearness and of our destined companionship, were pleasant to me. If it had been a weakness of the flesh rather than a desire of the heart that had flung me, one tired, enervated day, into Dirk's waiting arms, surely there was growing up within me a very satisfactory dependence upon him!

"Amy," he began abruptly—and then I knew he had something serious to say to me, for "A" was my everyday name from him—"Amy, Uncle Clifton says I'll never make a lawyer." He paused, and there went out of the spring day some of its beauty. "But," he hurried on, watching my face, "he thinks that I'll make something else just as good—only provided you aren't averse to leaving Salesport."

"Why should I be averse to leaving Salesport—some time?" I asked. "But what is it your Uncle Clif wants you to do?"

"He wants me to go out to Wyoming and look after his interests there. You know, he has a big ranch, and the water rights are threatened. He suspects his manager. He has had me digging into riparian and aquatic rights and all that sort of thing for the last six months. He wants me to go out, to study the situation, to make a detailed report to him in three months—and, if I like the prospect, and get along well, to remain as his representative. Could you stand it, darling?"

He was bending toward me, his young face eager and aflame. It was easy to see that the prospect called Dirk as nothing else in the line of a labor or a career had called him yet.

I looked at the Salesport street we were traversing, at its double row of elms, its white-painted, green-shuttered houses, with here and there a mellow old brick to give a note of color to the architectural effect. I smelled the salt air, marked the fresh, bright green of the lawns, the flame of the red in the

recesses of the Japanese quince bushes, the sparkling drops of gold upon the forsythias, the spikes of hyacinth and daffodil in the borders below all the drawing-room and library windows. I knew them all by heart—I knew the rooms behind the noncommittal white paint and the noncommittal red brick. I knew the men and women, the boys and girls, who dwelt in the houses—the Alcotts had known them for generations!

But it was not merely a girl's loyalty to her lover that made me turn quickly to Dirk and say with eager lips: "Stand it? I should adore it!" For sometimes I, like him, had smothered in the little town, and to me also had come the call of wider, wilder reaches, the stirring of the spirit of adventure.

"Oh, you blessed!" he cried, making an ineffective grasp at my hand. "Oh, Amy, I feel I'm made! I've never known exactly what I wanted—except you—or why I have been so listless and lackadaisical in my undertakings here. But I know now. It's because I have been stifling here! It's a little town, a petty place! We've been here too long, we Kidders. Oh, I should have stayed, and I should have made a not half-bad lawyer, in spite of Uncle Clif, if you had said the word. But—you'll never regret it, darling!"

When we had come to the cove itself, he told me how soon he was to start, and across the splendid picture of the future that we had been drawing, there fell a sudden gray veil. He was leaving me before the end of the week, he was leaving me with my difficulties increasing, with all my domestic problems half solved. I should be alone—there would be no more care-dispelling walks, no more laughter and bantering, no more sweet, warm, palpitating love-making.

"Oh, Dirk!" I cried, suddenly dissolving into tears, "I can't bear it—I can't! It will be a year before you could be ready for me—I can't bear a year without you! And they'll never be able to let me go by the end of the year. I can't bear it!"

It was growing dusky in our sheltered nook. He drew me close to him, held

me against his heart. His lips were on my hair, my cheeks, my neck. His voice was shaken and broken as I had never yet heard it.

"You do love me!" he kept saying. "You do love me, after all, do you not, you little Puritan? But Amy, Amy—you don't know, no woman can know—how I want you, how I need you! If only you could come with me now! If only I weren't such a poor, miserable creature that my own fare has to be advanced to me! What a wedding journey it would be, sweetheart! What a wedding journey it will be—in a year! In a year! Are you sure you will love me all the time I am away?"

"Sure, sure," I murmured, beneath his kisses. I had never been so sure of my love as in this abandonment to the pain of losing him, this anticipation of lonely, colorless days ahead.

I don't remember all the wild things he said, all the wild things he prayed of me. I do remember that when his passion had spent itself, and when he was talking "quite reasonably," as he said, and as I, poor child, believed, he begged me to meet him the next day in Boston, and to be secretly married to him. It would send him on his journey, he declared, fortified against all doubt, fortified almost against the grief of parting, dedicated to success. I remember that I finally promised to meet him in Boston, although I cried: "Remember, remember, Dirk—I don't promise anything more! Oh, I am not promising to do as you say—I am not promising!"

"I shan't ask it of you, A," he told me solemnly, "if, when we meet tomorrow, it doesn't seem wise. I shan't ask you to do a single thing that does not appeal to your reason."

We walked home in the evening—we had forgotten supper!—wide-eyed and excited at the burning possibility he had conjured up! Heaven knows why the idea had such attraction for us; I suppose it was because we were young and romantic. I forget now what advantages we found in the plan beside the one of "surety." I think we had worked our youthful love up to that state of fire

where the thought of being inviolably bound to each other was delicious, where it promised a sweet torture of possession that was yet no possession. By the time we reached the house I had quite made up my mind to accede to the plea of my lover. I felt very mature and settled as I told myself that I would marry him if he wished it. I wonder how many of the most egregious follies are committed under the delusion that they are especially sane and reasonable methods of procedure.

As a matter of fact, I did not marry Dirk the next day. I did not even go to Boston to meet him. When we came home from our walk to the cove, he left me at the door of the cottage—he could not bear to go in and talk commonplaces, he said, when all the universe outside was chanting one great bridal hymn. So he left me, with a burning look and a conventional lifting of the hat as I vanished into the tiny entry—whereat some of our poor, foreign neighbors, lolling on their fences, smiled their understanding, swarthy smiles, and doubtless shrugged their shoulders in the darkness over the dullness of the young in America.

Inside the house there was the odor of iodoform. There were bright lights and a curious silence. I called quickly: "Mother!" A nurse appeared at the landing at the top of the stairs. She glided swiftly down; her face was very grave.

"We have been sending everywhere for you, Miss Alcott," she murmured. "Your mother has had an accident—it is a serious one. You will have to be very brave, for your father is quite unstrung—"

"What is it?" I interrupted her. "When did it happen?"

"This afternoon about four o'clock. She was passing the new building on Main Street near the corner of Essex, and a girder that was being drawn up fell. It seems that there were shouts to warn her, but they only confused her. She— While there is life, of course, there is—"

"Oh, don't!" I cried impatiently. "Is she conscious?"

"Yes. But you must control yourself if you are allowed in her room. Doctor Alcott—is very much shaken."

"My sister? Where is she? My brother? Has he been notified?"

"Mrs. Maybury came and took Geraldine away when it was decided that she could be of no use here. And your father has sent for your brother."

Then I went up the narrow, inconvenient, little stairs, thinking with suddenly clarified mind that this, this was the meaning of life—ache, torture of body and spirit, loneliness, fear—and not that exquisite dream of bliss that we had dreamed down there in the cove as we had sat, cheek to cheek, listening to the gentle wash of the waves and watching the first flicker of the stars.

Her eyes were closed beneath her bandaged forehead; her uninjured hand lay upon the coverlid, indescribably white and spiritlike. On the bureau behind her, so arranged that the light could not disturb her, was set a lamp—the Water Street houses had no gas. My heart swelled within me to bursting as I saw her lying there, and saw, in one flash, the life she had lived of love and self-sacrifice that she had not known for sacrifice, so informed had it been by sheer devotion. I saw the mean little room where it was all to end—that life, half a child's fairy make-believe, half the saint's clear knowledge of the eternal verities.

As I knelt noiselessly beside the bed, she stirred and opened those large, exquisite eyes of her. They brightened a very little at sight of me. It seemed to me that I could feel a faint return of the pressure I laid upon her hand.

"Amy—darling," she fluttered. "Amy!" Then her eyes closed again.

By and by she opened them, and the poor, scarred face twitched into a smile.

"Dirk—so glad," she murmured. "Best—in life—good man's—good man's—" She struggled to finish.

"A good man's love?" I supplied the words. It was always easy to supply the words for my poor mother's sentimentalities—they were always the time-honored ones. She nodded faintly to express that I had comprehended her.

"Jerry?" she whispered next, this with a sort of anguish in her manner. The nurse applied something to her lips, and she seemed soothed.

"Jerry—baby," she whispered, her imploring eyes on me.

"I understand, dearest," I told her. "Jerry is your baby, and I will take care of her always, always!"

"Always, my good, dear Amy!" she said in a voice almost full and rounded. Then she pressed my fingers again, smiled that poor, distorted, brave smile, and whispered: "Dirk and Amy—always happy." Then she seemed to doze, and when she woke, she whispered: "John—my poor boy, my poor boy!" I bent over her again.

"Listen, mother darling," I told her, speaking distinctly to her dulling ear. "I shall try to be everything to him, too. You must not worry, my poor darling mother. I will take care of father."

Her eyes closed and she looked more peaceful. And by and by my father came in, and we sat together through the hours until she drifted out on the first, faint morning breeze that stirred the curtains at her window.

I looked across at my father, haggard, gray in that first light of the dawn, a broken figure, huddled in his chair, his finely featured, weak face curiously twisted. How my mother had cared for him, had adored him! What a glory had gilded the way they had walked together, obscure and rough as it had been! How she had loved him, the dreamy, the inefficient; and how she had never ceased to see in him the man he had been, perhaps, meant to be! There had been, I realized, no such miracle of love in the feeling that had made me cling happily to Dirk. Last night? A thousand years ago! But perhaps my mother's love was the growth and gift of time, of the years spent together. Perhaps, some day, I, too, should feel that same strange mingling of protecting love and worship and joyful surrender which had made her life so beautiful to her.

Then I sighed. So much remained for me to do before I could begin to live with Dirk! I realized that mother's

death had left me to be the uniting principle of the family. It had not needed the sacred promises given her to ease her night of pain to bind me to that service. That was fated from the moment she was smitten! My own affairs must wait. I touched father on the arm and led him from the room. And then I sent for Geraldine to come home.

Not long ago I found among my old papers a note that came to me when the day in Salesport was well awake, when Geraldine had come home, sobbing and distraught, and had been put to bed with a bromide, when my father had gone to sleep under the same beneficent influence. The postman, subduing his whistle at the unexpected sight of flowers and the crape upon our doorbell, had slid it noiselessly under the hall door. There I found it along with an advertisement of some new medical preparation for father, and the bill for some of the new bedding. It was from Dirk, and had been mailed at midnight the night before at a little town halfway to Boston. He wrote:

All night I have been walking, Amy my own; out under the stars that sang together when you promised to meet me to-morrow, out beside the sea whose great tides swelled joyfully at the sound of your words. I could not bear the walls of a house to-night, I could not bear to hear any words but yours, which I keep saying over and over to myself. And if, when you come to me with your dear face shining with goodness, with tenderness, with love for me—for me, the unworthy!—if when you come and give yourself forever to me, to hold against my heart in all the months we are to be separated—ah, Amy, let us not be separated! Let us not lose this divine rapture! Suppose that to-morrow we should go hand in hand to Uncle Cliff, and tell him that we were married, and that we must go together or stay together—do you know what I think Uncle Cliff would say? I think he would say: "You have some sense, after all, Dirkman. You have done a fine thing, and Amy shall go with you." Can't you hear him saying it, sweetheart? And even if he doesn't say it, even if we do not tell him the truth, even though we are separated, what joy it will be to know that we belong to each other, solemnly, sacredly, irrevocably! Oh, Amy, you will—you will—you must! It is that that the stars and the waves have been telling me all night.

Strange that the words he had writ-

ten with all the selfish sincerity of young passion and desire stirred no feeling in me but one of dull pity! Poor boy, poor boy! That was all my response as I slipped the little missive back into its envelope and laid it away.

Dirk stayed over for my mother's funeral, and then left me with the half-frightened air of finding me, who had known sorrow, another person than the girl he had kissed so ardently the other evening on the beach. Well, he was right. The endless ages had marked me with their sign.

CHAPTER II.

It was Mrs. Fenwick-Hall who discovered that Geraldine had a voice. Mrs. Fenwick-Hall was a very great lady indeed, and her summer place, a few miles out of Salesport on Stormy Point, was a sort of castle, crag-enthroned, wood-surrounded, its feet washed by the sea. Mrs. Fenwick-Hall was always "discovering" people. She had passed the age when the gratification of her more personal desires had power to please her, and she had taken to being a patron of the arts and of such artists as cared for patronage. It is, I judge, an employment that compensates for many excitements of which the flight of time robs women.

The way in which she discovered Jerry was much to her liking—it was picturesque, advertisable. An accident had befallen her motor car within the limits of old Salesport, and she, wearying of the monotony of sitting still to be stared at, and declining with unmistakable firmness the proffered hospitality of such of Salesport's first circles as thought themselves entitled to offer it, had walked down to the beach.

She walked like a duchess, Geraldine declared—like a somewhat elderly duchess, to be sure—slowly, with dignity, and a jeweled cane. To my mind she always seemed much more like the malevolent fairy who spoils the career of the princess to whose christening she is not invited. However, that was a matter of individual opinion. Enough to say that on this particular day she

was walking majestically along the beach at Salesport, when the tide was out and the shallows and pools and wet sands were glistening in the reflected light of the sunset behind the town, and that as she walked, a voice of piercing beauty and sweetness rang out in an anthem from behind a concealing rock.

Mrs. Fenwick-Hall stopped, looked, and listened, as the railroads so often advise one to do. She saw nothing, but she heard a volume of glorious sound soaring aloft on the summer air. She marched in the direction from which the sound came and as she described it in the next interview that she gave the Sunday papers—she gave them about twenty a year!—she saw there a young peri.

Jerry had unbound her hair—why I don't know, except that she had an in-born love of the spectacular—had removed her shoes and stockings that she might wade among the pools of sea water, and was standing in her improvised studio and dressing room between two rocks, pouring out her soul in the strains of an anthem that she had sung in church on Sunday. She must have made a striking picture—her glorious mop of hair shining, rippling down her black dress, her pretty, white, bare legs gleaming below it, the sea and the sunset her background. Jerry was beginning to outgrow the scrawniness of early girlhood, and her slenderness was becoming a matter of gentle, gracious curves.

It seems that Mrs. Fenwick-Hall, having surveyed the vision through her gold-mounted lorgnette, demanded, not who Geraldine was, but who her singing teacher was. Geraldine, blushing uncomfortably because of her legs and her hair, mumbled that she had no singing teacher—only a piano teacher; and that he was Casanova, of Boston. Whereupon, Mrs. Fenwick-Hall expressed devout thanks that her voice had not been ruined by bad methods, and asked her name.

"I shall call on your parents," stated Mrs. Fenwick-Hall firmly. "It is a crime, no less, that such a voice as yours should not be trained. Do they realize

how few pure contraltos there are in the world? Do they— The piano! Ridiculous! It is your voice that is the marvelous thing about you. Where do you live?"

Geraldine said, in relating the incident, that at first she felt ashamed to tell this magnificent, but unknown, stranger that we lived on Water Street. Then she bethought herself of the truth often preached by our mother, that it was no matter where an Alcott lived, since nothing could lower him; and she bethought herself further that, if she had such a voice as the lady declared, she had that which made her greater than any hobbling duchess, however majestic. So she mentioned Water Street with proper nonchalance, and in reply to the great lady's announcement that she wished to descend upon Water Street immediately, she smilingly asked the great lady's name. It seemed that the lorgnette came into play at this piece of youthful self-assertion, but as Jerry refused to wither beneath it, and stood smiling and serene, Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's grim face relaxed.

"You'll do!" she informed the child with a sort of amusement in her voice, and she told who she was. And Geraldine accepted the information calmly, untroubled by greatness, although, like all the world of Salesport, she knew the position that Mrs. Fenwick-Hall occupied in the world that amuses itself. She led the way to the cottage, where I was at working canning peas in the kitchen. The same grateful and faithful patient who had given us of her store of discarded beds had now sent me produce from her great, overgrown garden.

I was just at that ticklish moment in the canning process where the covers must be snapped down tight against the intrusion of any air. I told Jerry somewhat crossly that I could not leave the kitchen; if her new-found friend was in such a hurry, she would have to come and see me there. Father was off fishing with some of his friends of leisurely habits and tastes like his own.

No one could be more gracious than Mrs. Fenwick-Hall when she chose.

She chose, that day, to be gracious to me. There was frankness, equality, amiability in her handclasp; there was sisterly fellow feeling in her laughing: "How this takes me back to my own young housewife days! There isn't a more fascinating occupation in the world, I think. I have often been sorry that my servants nowadays have all the fun of my houses, and I only the gloomy responsibility of them. However, I came to talk to you and your father about this child's voice. Do you know it is a marvelous one?"

Geraldine was looking at me with eyes on fire with hope and expectation. I kept on snapping down my air-tight covers.

"I know her voice is very sweet," I admitted grudgingly. I felt so sure that some new trial awaited me that I could not be cordial about it.

"Very sweet!" cried Mrs. Fenwick-Hall in derision. "My dear young lady, you talk as if she were a member of the village choir—"

"She is—of the Young People's Choir," I interrupted.

"Well, she ought not to be! She ought to be under competent instruction. She ought not to be allowed to strain and ruin her voice. Why, my dear Miss Alcott, it's a voice for the Metropolitan, for Covent Garden—"

Again I interrupted her. I had snapped down the last cover and could give all my attention to the question before us.

"But, Mrs. Fenwick-Hall," I said—it was easier to stab the great hope that had been born in Geraldine's heart through speech with another than directly—"but Mrs. Fenwick-Hall, we are very poor. We have all known that my sister had musical ability, and she has had careful training in the piano. Even if she had such a voice as you say she has, we could not possibly afford to have it cultivated. Indeed, it is with difficulty that we meet the trifling expenses connected with her piano training—Signor Casanova is most kind, and in view of what he considers her great talent, takes her at a nominal charge. But even so—well, we shall be very



Mrs. Fenwick-Hall, having surveyed the vision through her gold-mounted lorgnette, demanded, not who Geraldine was, but who her singing teacher was.

glad when she can take pupils on her own account."

I spoke firmly. Sometimes, lately, Geraldine had seemed to forget that she must soon take her place in the ranks of the workers, and seemed to think more of public appearances, of recitals, and the like than of the plain drudgery that was before her.

Mrs. Fenwick-Hall rose from the chair where she was sitting, swept some papers off one nearer me, and sat down in it.

"But all this," she cried, "is sacrilege! Your sister has a gift—a genius! It does not belong to her, but to the world. It is not for you to say what shall be done with it—it belongs to the world! I am sure that I am not mistaken—I am sure she has a voice of the most splendid promise, a voice that should be an honor to her country, a joy to all mankind! I——" She hesitated and blushed through her makeup; then she went on: "It is a privilege to aid genius. It is, I think, the greatest privilege which wealth has. I don't see much sense in trying to relieve poverty

and to reform crime; there's too much of them, and the task is hopeless. But genius is rare! Wealth may reach the few cases of it that exist. If—if, upon having some real authorities hear your sister's voice, my judgment is upheld in regard to it—it would be the greatest of privileges——" She broke off. I don't know whether she saw the blank repugnance in my face or whether she felt that she had reached the graceful point at which to pause.

"I—— It is quite impossible, Mrs. Fenwick-Hall," I said; "although you are very kind to suggest it. I——"

"Surely you would not allow a little, petty disinclination to 'be under an obligation,' I think the phrase is"—scornfully—"to stand between your sister and a great career?"

"I am not my sister's guardian," I replied. "But—if you will not think me rude and unappreciative, I should allow that petty disinclination to stand between my sister and the acceptance of great—very great—favours from strangers."

She arose then. She shook her head

—an age-defying head, crowned with a mahogany-red wig and enameled to hide the wrinkles—gently at me. She smiled.

"Proud as Lucifer—of course! Dear Miss Alcott, I might have known one of your name would be! But as for myself—I come of common stock, as all my enemies delight to remind me from time to time. I had my early schooling—none too much, either—free, the gift of the State. I took all the favors offered me by strangers and friends alike. I am not going to pretend to share, though I admire, your quixotism. But I am going to remind you that while you have the right to be quixotic for yourself, you have not the right to be quixotic for your sister. I am coming in some day soon to talk with your father. When is the best time to find him?"

I told her what father's office hours were, and added that he was withdrawing more and more from practice, and that she could probably find him any time she cared to telephone for an appointment. And then Jerry ran to the head of the street to learn if the Fenwick-Hall car was mended, and Mrs. Fenwick-Hall trailed her *crêpe de chine* and chiffon out of the Water Street shanty, and went on to the palace that she had made for herself at the point.

"Oh, A, A, A!" cried Geraldine when she was gone. "Isn't it too wonderful? Oh, A, A, A! Suppose it should be true! Oh, my darlingest Amy, you should never put up another can of anything in your life! We should live in the most beautiful rooms, full of silvery brocade hangings and baskets of orchids. And all the most interesting people in the world should come to see us, and emperors should send me emeralds in recognition of my great gifts, and we should—"

"You are forgetting, Jerry, in your raptures," I interrupted her crossly, "that I haven't the least yearning for silver brocade and orchids and emeralds, but that I want a shack on the edge of the Western prairie. With Dirk," I added determinedly. Every now and then I was obliged to insist upon my own plans for my own exist-

ence—they seemed so relegated to a remote—an indefinite—future in the minds of the rest of the household.

"Oh, as for you and Dirk," exclaimed Geraldine largely, "I shall be so rich that you can both be on my staff at perfectly regardless salaries! We'll never be separated. He—he might be my press agent," she added contemplatively.

I laughed long and loud at this, and the air was cleared. Geraldine herself grinned sheepishly.

"But, oh, Amy, if I have such a voice!" she ended.

Well, I was overruled in the discussion that ensued when father came in from his fishing. To tell the truth, I advanced to the fray without sufficient faith in the righteousness of my own cause. What were the inalienable privileges of genius in the world? I did not know, but I felt a dim belief that they were greater and other than the privileges of the ungifted. Perhaps, if Geraldine had such a voice as Mrs. Fenwick-Hall declared—and surely Mrs. Fenwick-Hall, connoisseur of all the arts, hearer of all the operas, patroness of all the stars, ought to know a voice when she heard it!—perhaps, if Geraldine had such a voice, she ought to be spared the drudgery of teaching the piano, she ought to be allowed to devote herself to the cultivation of the greater gift. Perhaps I, with Dirk's enthusiastic letters from Wyoming under my pillow at night, against my heart by day, was selfish, selfish to the core! When the deadening effects of my shock and grief at mother's loss had begun to pass, I had begun to feel again the yearnings I had felt that wonderful evening when I had been almost ready to give myself wholly to my lover.

When father, with his finest air of conferring a favor—it was pretty and amusing to see how Mrs. Fenwick-Hall deferred to the *grand seigneur* in father, and with what effect she pronounced the words, "Doctor Alcott," as if she were saying, "your highness"—said that he would permit Geraldine to go with her new friend to New York, there to

have a great master of singing hear her voice, I began, desperately, bitterly, to hope that the master would find her voice no such marvel, after all! For they were talking now of three years here, of two years there. They were assuming, in every word, that I had no more sacred duties or desires than to stand guard over my sister while her gift was developing.

And I myself did not see how it would be possible for the motherless girl to drift about the world alone, "taking" here of this teacher, there of that, "finishing" with a third, being tried out before this director of a small German opera company, being passed rapidly on to that Italian. Geraldine was nearly seventeen. I was only six years her senior, but my hair was not gloriously red, my eyes were not the wonderful brown that goes with red hair, my skin was not white as alabaster.

Moreover, I had none of what I began to suspect Geraldine of having—I had no "temperament." Temperament, as I became aware of it, seemed to me a very dangerous quality for a young woman to carry about the world with her, especially if it were complicated by beauty. I felt that Geraldine would need to be much older than I then was before she could be trusted to manage herself anywhere outside the safe, family-guarded limits of Salesport.

And so, while the trial of her voice was in progress, I sat at home, hoping that she would prove to have some flaw in it fatal to public performing. But they—Mrs. Fenwick-Hall and Jerry—came home from New York, one day in September, triumphant. The great master of singing in that city had told the great lady that she had discovered one of the rare voices of all the ages.

Geraldine seemed touched with a sort of awe at the verdict. She looked at me out of large, starry eyes, and said nothing except, in a low tone: "He says I have a great voice, A." And then, after I had summoned some false-sounding congratulations from within myself, she went on: "I am to give up Casanova except for once a week—a

half hour. And I am to go every day to Boston to Mademoiselle Arnier—for practice as well as instruction. So many voices, they say, are ruined in the early days of practicing. Mrs. Fenwick-Hall is"—she blushed a little, but kept her gaze steadily on mine—"is providing for it all, the railroad fares and the lessons. She says that I am not to feel oppressed by any sense of obligation—that I may pay her, if I care to, when I have my first Metropolitan engagement, and that, anyway, it is more to her to have the renown of discovering me. A, she really has been lovely about it all," she ended, interrupting her narrative of Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's remarks.

I tried not to cloud her happiness. And when she said to me, with the sudden quivering lips and tearful eyes of a little girl: "Oh, Amy, if only mother could know!" I put my arms about her and kissed her with an unreserved love. After all, Dirk was not ready for me yet. Perhaps, by the time he was, Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's munificence would have extended to the point of providing Jerry with suitable chaperonage as well as with suitable instruction.

For two years life went on in the old way. Father definitely retired from practice when an octogenarian uncle of his died and left him enough money to purchase a small annuity. Mrs. Fenwick-Hall was very generous with Geraldine. Not only did she keep her promise in regard to the lessons and the railroad fares, but she made the child presents of beautiful clothes, of occasional trips. In the summer she invited her a great deal to Stormy Point, and Geraldine used to come home from these expeditions with glowing cheeks and brightened, deepened eyes. Sometimes I suspected an incipient love affair, and I rather rejoiced in the prospect. But nothing of that sort befell her, though she had grown to be a beautiful girl with an air of distinction more rare than beauty itself.

She never sang, of course. Her first step, on the discovery that she had a voice, was, naturally, to resign from the Young People's Choir; and never since

she had entered the long ranks of aspirants for the operatic stage had any one heard her sing except Mademoiselle Arnier. She studied, at Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's dictation, the modern languages. She went a good deal to the opera with people whom she met at Stormy Point. She lived, as she once informed me when I suggested that she should dust her room, "for her art." And she also told me, on that occasion, that she would one day richly repay me for all the dusting I was doing now!

At the end of two years, Dirkman Kidder came home. He wrote me for what he was coming—to claim my promise to marry him. He wrote with enthusiasm of the country in which his lot was now cast, and with confidence of his prospects in it. He was not only manager of his uncle's extensive interests, but he had acquired interests of his own; he was grubstaking a prospector whose riches, when they were discovered, he would share; he had a substantial owner's share in a cattle ranch which the other partner managed. All was ready for our marriage.

I told Geraldine that he was coming home. She was in her room, a strangely exotic figure in the midst of its plain, clean simplicity and poverty; she was wearing as a negligee a gorgeous Chinese coat that Mrs. Fenwick-Hall had given her. She was engaged in polishing a rosy nail. Her hands, I noticed for the thousandth time, were lovely, with taper wrists and fingers, and soft, smooth, finely knit, white flesh. I gave a glance at my own, and tucked them out of sight behind the sleeves of my blouse. They were rough, scarred, unlovely hands. I felt sorry for Dirk, who would want to kiss them—until he suddenly saw them as they were, instead of as he had dreamed them.

I looked at myself with misgivings before Dirk came. The two years of hard work and of anxiety had not improved my appearance. I had begun to look old. It was not that my face was lined, my muscles drooping; it was only that I bore about me the unmistakable signs of harassing responsibility. It seemed to me, studying myself

in the small mirror over my bureau—the only pier glass in the Water Street house was in Geraldine's room, where it grazed both ceiling and floor with its gilded frame—that in some dull, gray way there was recorded upon me every week's worry about the household bills, every balancing of corned beef against pot roast and of baked beans against both, every agitated question as to how much longer father and Jerry would endure this or that cheap article of food. It seemed to me that all my study of the worthy literature on "how to cook cheap cuts," "inexpensive substitutes for dear meats," "beating the high cost of living" was duly, indubitably, graven upon me.

My clothes lacked charm and lure—I hadn't thought of it until I began to view myself as Dirk would view me. In the old days, mother, with some native talent for effect, had managed to keep both Geraldine and me "looking nice" on next to nothing, and on Cousin Judith's hand-me-downs. But that talent had not been mine. I looked dowdy. I had a moment's intention of refusing to see him. He was suddenly a critical stranger; he was not the lover who had walked along the shore of the sounding sea, listening to the song the stars sang together and hearing in it only our nuptial hymn. I was afraid to see him.

Geraldine, glinting with laughter and dimples, a copper-and-blue-and-white vision in a delft linen and a big panama—gifts of her patron—came to the door of my room.

"I'm going out," she announced. "I'm the most considerate sister you ever had! I am going out to be gone exactly two hours. It is now two o'clock, and Dirk's train gets in at two-forteen, and the station cab will bear him to your side in four minutes. So I'm off. I've already driven your paternal relative out of the house. He was playing solitaire and yawning himself to death in the office"—we still called my father's den by the name of its more laborious days—"and he is now at the public library deep in the memoirs of some old French court busybody and scandalmonger. He has

orders not to return until five. And Cousin Kate is to invite him and me to supper at six, so that you and Dirk may—oh, do something truly devilish, such as having dinner at the Mansion House!"

She laughed joyously, her eyes dancing, at the thought of that dingy substitute for the glittering hostilities of her brighter experience. "Hustle now," she added, "and get into your pink dimity. You're too pale, and that will give you a little color. Why don't you rub my rabbit's foot across— Oh, well, don't look like outraged virtue! Pinch your cheeks, at least! And I'll be back at four to tell Master Dirk exactly when he may hope to marry you!" She nodded and ran out of the room.

I moved to the closet to take down the pink dimity. But when I had opened the door, I suddenly didn't want to wear it. No; if I was pale, sallow, dull, and uninteresting looking, let Dirk see me so, and make the best or the worst of me! I shut the door with a bang, and sat down in my white cotton blouse and my cheap, faded khaki skirt to wait for him. My heart was beating uncomfortably, and my breath seemed acrobatic. It was a stranger who was coming. I had a dizzy sensation of thankfulness that it was not my husband! It might have been—and yet he would have been as great a stranger after the two years!

The cheap little bell jangled its rude notes through the house. I rose and took a last look in the mirror before I went downstairs. I was as white as a candle; I looked frightened. I jerked my shoulders back, I held my head high, and walked down the narrow stairs to the tiny box of an entry. I opened the door and looked up into the eyes of my lover. I think that he was eager for that first glimpse of me; perhaps it was merely the eagerness of curiosity. I think we uttered each other's names in the staccato voices customary on such occasions. And then he was in the little entry, the door closed behind him, his arms about me.

He was changed, though, from the boy who had gone away. He seemed

bigger—he had grown broader. He was mature, experienced, a man to command life, not a boy to plead with it. He did not look ruthless—not in the least; but he seemed to have developed great possibilities of strength. He had become the sort of man of whom it might be said that he knew what he wanted, and he knew how to proceed to get it.

What he wanted now, when our greetings and our raptures and our re-introduction to each other had passed, was to know how soon I would marry him.

"It's a great world, and you'll love it!" he told me, with more of his old quality of enthusiasm than he had shown before. "I have loved it even without you—I shall be quite mad about it with you by my side. Now, how soon will you be ready to start back with me? I thought perhaps you'd like to do a month's honeymooning around in the East before you bury yourself in the wilds? Shall we be married in a month and go back in two?"

He looked at me squarely, resolutely. For the first time in my life I marked the strength of his chin, the determination of his jaw. I felt a cowardly panic.

"I—I—" I began weakly, twisting my fingers together, biting my lips. "Oh, Dirk, I can't—so soon!" I ended falteringly.

"So soon? But it's two years since you promised to marry me, and it's two months since I wrote you I was coming East to claim your promise."

"Yes—and to see your Uncle Clif," I reminded him. "And," I added with sudden penetration, "I haven't a doubt you've already seen him!"

Dirk laughed. "Ah, now you look more like yourself," he assured me, and he seemed pleased at the recrudescence of the Amy he had known. "It's true that I have seen Uncle Clif. I knew," he went on, with something of the air of a practiced gallant, "that once I had seen you, I should want to waste no more time with Uncle Clif. So I got him off my chest, so to speak, last night. But come now, A, tell me whether it shall be this day fortnight, or this

day month—or"—he leaned toward me with something of the old, boyish fire and charm—"or this day!"

A little wave of pleasure, of surrender, ran through me. He was emerging—the boy to whom I had pledged myself, the wooer who had almost won me once before. Then I thought of Geraldine and that lovely, golden, floating voice; of Geraldine, with, perhaps, two or three more years of study before her; of Geraldine, spectacularly pretty, woefully impractical, a child to be guarded, a genius to be nurtured, an Alcott to be properly chaperoned!

"Dirk," I temporized, "I didn't object to waiting one year—two years—any length of time you might think necessary, did I?"

He sat back in his chair and regarded me shrewdly, measuringly.

"On the contrary," he told me, "you seemed almost frigidly indifferent to the waiting."

"No, it was not frigidity. It was not even timidity," I told him, gathering courage as I plunged into the debate. "It was an acceptance of your necessities. Will you accept my necessities, and wait for me?"

He leaned farther back in his chair; his eyes narrowed, his jaw hardened. I seemed to see in him the record of hard-fought fights out there in the West.

"What are your necessities?" he asked slowly. "Do you need to make a home for me? Do you need to be tested in the world of men, and to discover whether you have the ability to meet them as equals, and therefore have the right to talk of marriage? My necessities were for us both. Are yours?"

He shot the question at me harshly. I shook my head.

"No. If I ask you to wait, it will not be for the sake of anything connected with our life together," I told him, "though it may be for the sake of proving whether I am a woman fit to take responsibilities. If I gave up one—threw it away—made mincemeat of it, in order to assume new ones—"

"I hope"—he smiled whimsically upon me and leaned forward to take

my hands—"that you aren't regarding marriage with me wholly in the light of a laborious responsibility to be assumed! Oh, A, what rot you are talking! Do you love me? Do you love me? Of course you do!" And I did, at that moment with his arms about me, his kisses upon me. "Of course, of course you do! And when a man and a woman love each other and there is no obstacle to their marriage—when they both have had the wondrous good luck and good sense not to be already married to some one else—when the man is making a living and can support a home—why, then, my little Puritan, their greatest responsibility is to be married at once, immediately, if not sooner!" He ended, laughing, with a catch witticism from our school days.

I slid out of his arms, and, flushed and happy from his embrace, but fortified in my own resolution, I mentioned the name of my responsibility.

"Geraldine! Nonsense! Fudge and likewise rot!" he cried. "Geraldine is a husky young person, perfectly capable of taking care of herself and of your father. And let me tell you, my dear, that if it's a question of chaperonage, Doctor Alcott is better suited to the job than you are! He hasn't such beautiful eyes, my darling." His voice softened, his gaze dwelt fondly upon me. "Anyway," he finished masterfully, "I won't have it. You're engaged to marry me, I'm in a position to marry, I've come for you, and I don't mean to go away without you. Let Geraldine live with your Mrs. Fenwick-Hall if she wants to!"

I laughed. Mrs. Fenwick-Hall was not a lady to burden herself with duties. And though his determination warmed my heart, made me forget the tale my mirror had told me, made me forget the down-dragging of the two years since mother's death, nevertheless I felt no weakening in my resolve to stay with Geraldine until her professional launching or her marriage released me. Somehow the very reassurance as to Dirk's sentiments made me feel the more content to wait, to see Geraldine through. With Dirk loving me, the world was a

joyful, sunny place; nothing else mattered much—certainly not another year or two of waiting for marriage!

And as I leaned toward him and began to tell him this, the door opened, and, intrusive as a northwest breeze, as sparkling, as vigorous, as joyous, Geraldine burst into the house. I knew her step in the little hall, but she gave another indication of her presence. She hummed a half dozen bars from the "Lohengrin" wedding march in that rich, thrilling voice of hers as she darted in upon us.

"I warned you I'd be back at four, A," she said to me, though her eyes and her hand were for Dirk. "Dirk! How well you look—how—doesn't he, Amy?"

"Especially the 'how,'" I agreed.

"But—but so much older!" cried Geraldine admiringly. "Oh, I'll give my consent now! You know, Dirk," she continued with a sort of shy impertinence that sat well upon her, "I never quite agreed in my deepest heart to this marriage—"

"No," interrupted Dirk, smiling back upon her. "I remember you tempered your congratulations by telling me that you had always intended to marry me yourself!"

She blushed and seemed tongue-tied for a second. But only for a second. "What a brat I was!" she admitted, in complete and handsome apology. "Well, that wasn't what I meant. I never quite subscribed to the engagement, not because I wanted you myself, but because you didn't seem quite masterful enough for Amy. She takes an awful lot of mastering, that dove-like sister of mine! But now"—she looked at him again critically, approvingly—"but now you look equal to the job!"

"I am," he declared. His eyes were on her, lit with amusement and admiration. "I am capable of mastering her, and I begin by declaring that she is to marry me at once, instead of waiting for you to finish your musical education, which is her present plan."

Geraldine unpinned her big hat and threw it, with the gesture of one to whom panamas are nothing, upon the

sofa. She sank into a big chair and faced him more gravely.

"It can be perfectly well managed," she informed him, "if you aren't selfish and pig-headed." She waited a moment for him to deny these qualities, but he did not speak, only sat watching her with narrowed eyes. "I have been talking to Mrs. Fenwick-Hall about it," she added. "I've been quite miserable; it seemed so abominable to let poor A's happiness wait upon my voice. But a marriage may be solemnized any day in the week, Dirk, and a voice—well, it dictates its own times and terms." She sighed, the weight of her gift seeming heavy upon her spirit.

"Yes?" said Dirk, after a pause. "Yes? And—"

"Oh, yes! And so I talked with Mrs. Fenwick-Hall about it, and she has a really splendid plan."

"Yes?" said Dirk again.

I found myself incapable of speech. My cheeks were blazing with a sort of angry shame that Geraldine should have dared to discuss me and my affairs with her patroness, who had managed, with the regal indifference of her type, to limit her acquaintance to the one member of our family who might do her credit. I wondered at Dirk's self-restraint. I could feel him angry, too.

"And she says that, of course, since you were bred to be an Eastern lawyer, and have been out there in the wilderness only two years, you can't have any very deep roots in Western soil. So she says you can—that you probably would be willing to give it up"—she was stumbling a little now—"for Amy—and for a good Eastern opening. And she will arrange that you have one in her cousin's New York office—you know he's Seaman, of Rutherford, Seaman & Van Slack—and then you and A can be married as soon as you can close up your affairs out there in Wyoming, and can keep house in New York—"

"Chaperoning you in Salesport by long distance, I suppose?" I managed to interject.

"Oh!" cried Geraldine blandly. "No. I am to live with you. Every one says I should have a year and maybe two



I kept on snapping down my air-tight covers "I know her voice is very sweet," I admitted grudgingly.

with Sinotti in New York before I go on to Paris. Mademoiselle Arnier has done all she can with me."

Dirk looked at her silently for a few minutes. His face, which was darkly tanned, seemed to me to have grown pale with anger under the brown of the open-air years of sun and alkaline winds. His eyes were boring holes in Geraldine, but she seemed oblivious of the rage and contempt of his look. Suddenly and fiercely he turned upon me.

"And what do you say, Amy," he cried, "to this plan that your sister and her friend have so kindly made for your life and mine?"

"It's absurd, of course," I answered, and was surprised that I spoke with control and evenness. "It is like the imperious vanity of that rich, spoiled woman to undertake to mold the existence of people she doesn't even know, just to gratify her own ambition. She is crazy to bring out an artist of the

first rank, I am told. She refused to help Maude Horton, they say, and has been full of rage ever since. She and that Chicago woman—I forget her name—who did support Horton through her years of training are rivals in a way——"

"Amy," cut in Dirk sharply, "don't go on psychologizing about Mrs. Fenwick-Hall and berating her colossal impertinence. Devote a stray word or thought or two to your sister."

"I am sure," Geraldine thrust in quickly, "that whatever you may be pleased to think in your perfectly natural male egoism"—I devoted a stray thought to wondering where the child had picked up her vocabulary, forgetting the educative influences of Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's house parties—"I am not actuated by selfishness in my desire to perfect my voice and to have a great career! I want to be able to do everything for my family! Nor is Mrs. Fenwick-Hall to be sneered at and vil-

fied"—she flashed a vindictive glance at me—"for making you an offer that half the young lawyers in the East would give five years of their lives for!"

There was something in what she said, of course. It was a magnificent offer, a magnificent opening. But Dirk was no lawyer by taste, however valuable his legal training might be to him in the work he loved. I knew, from his letters, how the wider, more active life of the country in which he now dwelt—friendlier and yet more hostile, harder and easier both, than the life of the East—appealed to him, satisfied him. And I, too, had longed for it.

"Everything depends upon the point of view," Dirk admitted, less violently now. "But however magnificent the opening Mrs. Fenwick-Hall would arrange for me, I couldn't accept it. She is mistaken. My roots are deep in the Western soil. That is where my career lies, my work, and my life. It is there that my wife will go with me." He turned toward me. "Will she not, Amy?" he asked more gently.

"Yes—some time," I answered, my eyes blinded by tears.

"Now," he insisted.

I looked at him and tried to smile. "Combative person!" I said. "Why does the whole universe have to be re-adjusted the first hour you are home?" I was temporizing. I believed that by cool discussion, by long, calm thought, we could arrive at some satisfactory conclusion to the whole matter. Dirk looked at his watch.

"I came back East to be married," he said. "That is the one—the chief—object of my journey. If I am not going to be married, I am going back in a week. I'll give you three days, Amy, to decide."

He restored his watch to its pocket, and looked at me with level eyes. At first there was nothing tender in them, only a cold challenge. But as he gazed, and as I gazed back, more angry than perturbed—I disliked the businesslike sharpness of his new style—his expression changed. The boyish smile came back to his lips, the boyish cajolery to

his manner. He leaned over and caught my hand.

"You'll lose, Jerry, my dear girl!" he informed her with triumphant gayety. "You'll lose!"

The three days were feverish ones for me. Dirk refused to debate the question with me. "Make your decision yourself," he said to me; "you know where I stand. No talk can alter that." He would not help me, he would not yield an inch of what he claimed as his right. But he surrounded me with an atmosphere of such warm, gay, admiring affection that it wrung my very soul to contemplate the loss of it. More potent than argument was the constant evidence of his consideration; not since he had gone away had I been first in any one's regard. Geraldine's voice was first in hers, and then all that might minister to its perfection and to her own comfort; and father's indolence was first with him—he called it peace! Now, for three bright days, I was first in some one's thoughts, in some one's love. Even the constant discussion going on in my mind could not destroy all my joy in the fact—all my joy and pride and hopefulness.

Geraldine crept into my room early on the morning of the third day. Her copperish hair hung in two splendid, braided ropes down her back. Her face was ivory-white, her blue eyes darkened by the strain of thought and fear. She curled herself up on the foot of my bed, facing me; I moved my feet beneath the coverlid to make room for her.

"Oh, A!" she cried. "Oh, A!" Her childish young lips quivered. "I can't bear to stand between you and your happiness, but I think he might wait! Since he's so rude about Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's offer. I—I told her that, even if you did marry him now, and go West, I should go to New York to Sinotti just the same. Loads of girls go there alone, and nothing happens to them. But she said—she is awfully bent upon having her own way"—admitted Geraldine reflectively—"that she wanted my golden voice and my golden personality and my golden reputation to burst upon

the public all untarnished. She said that I didn't know how to take care of myself, physically or socially—that few artists did! And that I would probably make myself ill and collect undesirable acquaintances and even have cheap experiences—she said it, A, not I—and that all those things would be disastrous. She wanted to introduce a genius who was also a lady, she said; she said it hadn't been done before! Of course that's a mistake. But she was thinking of that Chicago woman and Maude Horton. And—it's abominable, A—but I know she won't go on with me except on her own terms. I dare say," added Geraldine wistfully, "that some of the others who have heard my voice might take me up if she dropped me. But——"

"You poor child!" I cried, as Geraldine's exposition of her state ended in a sudden shower of tears. I had always hated her position; I had marveled at the ease with which father permitted her dependence on the whim of a rich woman. Suppose she lost her voice, her ambition—where would Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's glory be then?

I thought rapidly. I was burning with wrath over the indignities heaped upon my sister—the coercion, the restraint. Yet it was not just to be too severe—Mrs. Fenwick-Hall had been wildly generous, according to her lights; and what she said was true. Geraldine had not been called upon to develop common sense in regard to her health or her associates. Salesport, when one's great grandfather had been born there, and all one's ancestors since, offers few opportunities for unfortunate acquaintance; and some one had always stood between Jerry and the practical worries of the world. Mrs. Fenwick-Hall was right in thinking that it would be disastrous for the girl to become responsible for her own practical career.

And if Dirk loved me, he would be willing to wait another year or two! I could spend those years in teaching Geraldine to be a level-headed, capable, careful woman; besides, she would be older, staidier! If he loved me, he

would be willing to let me finish the work I had to do for Geraldine, to prepare her to pay the debt we had all allowed her to contract. So I kissed her and told her not to worry. She brightened at once; she did not ask me for any further pledge or assurance, but, with face as refreshed as a flower's after rain, she went back to her room.

The next morning Dirk started West again. Our engagement was broken. He said that my decision to remain with Geraldine meant that I did not love him, and that he had no desire to be married or engaged to an unloving woman. He was curt, and, it seemed to me, cruel in his decision. I made no allowance for his wounded, youthful vanity, for his hopes and plans shattered. I made no allowance for the fact that he would go back, wifeless, to the country he had left with joyful proclamation of his matrimonial errand. I made no allowance for anything, and hence was able to be sufficiently angry and injured, myself, by his attitude, to lose in those emotions the grief and the forebodings of loneliness that might have made me miserable.

CHAPTER III.

I sat on a long bench in a dusky, dusty hall. Through the door at one end of it, constantly opening and shutting. I caught uninviting glimpses of the bare, dingy foyer of an old-fashioned office building. A noisy elevator slammed its door constantly upon this landing; even through the wall separating the outer from the inner corridor, one could hear the constant bang and rattle. And every time it crashed, it disgorged into the inner one a new group of men who had business in the office where I sat—of men whose business would not wait, of men who could not be relegated to the long bench, or whose terms of sitting there, provided they were for a moment halted, were brief.

The fox-faced, blond, nonchalant boy who sat behind a wicket halfway along the hall seemed to know most of the

comers. I regarded them wistfully; perhaps they were all employed upon the *Morning Courier*. I was waiting—endless undertaking, it began to seem!—to “see the editor.” I held in my shabbily gloved hand a neat roll of manuscript which I clutched tightly, as if it were an oar and I were struggling with it through a stormy sea.

Well, after a fashion, I suppose I was regarding it as an oar. If I didn't induce the “editor”—unknown Jove!—to look upon it favorably, how were Geraldine and I ever going to manage?

One of the fox-faced, blond, nonchalant gatekeeper's even more nonchalant envoys strolled out from the distant inner region. The young man who happened to be waiting on the bench beside me, might, it seemed, go in toward the Holy of Holies. He had been there three minutes, I thirty. My cheeks burned painfully with nervousness and with resentment; the hand clutching the roll of manuscript was icy cold, and there was a dull constriction in my throat. But, in response to the summons: “Mr. Bromley says for you to come in, Mr. Sawtelle,” the young man, instead of going, looked questioningly at me.

“Were you waiting to see Bromley, too?” he asked me. His voice was cordial, easy, pleasant. “Because, if you were—really my errand has no connection with business! It's about polo ponies.” He confided this with an air of humorous appreciation of the unsuitability of the errand to a workaday newspaper office. “So that—?” His upward inflection seemed to indicate that his turn was mine for the taking.

“Oh, no!” I faltered. “Not until Mr. Bromley sends for me.” I looked sharply at the nonchalant one. “You are sure you gave Mr. Bromley the slip?” I asked him.

It had been a forbidding slip on which Mr., Mrs., or Miss Blank was required to state which Mr. Blank of all the myriads on the *Morning Courier* she wished to see and on what business. I had filled it out to the best of my ability:

Miss—Alcott wishes to see
M.—The Editor
Concerning—A contribution.

And it had been the king of the nonchalant boys who had supplied me with the information that the editor was Mr. Bromley.

“Oh, yes,” he assured me now. “He said, like I told you, ma'am, to say he'd be busy for an hour.”

“Well, it isn't an hour yet,” I mentioned grimly to Mr. Sawtelle. “And he probably meant that he would be busy about polo ponies. So—thank you just the same.” I couldn't help smiling at him, he had such a smiling manner himself.

“I tell you,” he suggested brilliantly. “Why not give me that roll of manuscript, and I'll take it up with Bromley before we begin on the ponies? And then he'll send for you at once. Gad, the airs these editor persons give themselves! Bromley acts like a little tin czar. Keeping a lady waiting! Shall I take it?”

He held out his hand for it. It was a big, firm, well-kept hand, and the gloves that he held in its fellow—heavy, dull brown doeskin, with big pearl buttons and coarse, expensive stitching—were so much better looking than mine—derelicts from Geraldine's wardrobe—that I wouldn't have lifted my hand to give him the manuscript for a fortune! I thanked him, a little more coldly this time, for his offer, and again declined it. And he, shaking his head humorously upon me, as upon an obstinately impractical person, went his way, and I resigned myself to further waiting.

If I couldn't sell the little thing in my hand, or if I could not induce the editor of the *Morning Courier* to see that it revealed me as the sort of a person he wanted to employ—what were we to do, Geraldine and I? I began “doing” the mental arithmetic I had been doing for three weeks now—eighteen dollars a week for her room, eleven for mine, three dollars for our washing, five dollars a half hour three half hours a week for Sinotti, anything you please for car fares—no more cab fares, I used to tell myself in the midst of my

computations—anything you can scrimp together for clothes. Entertainment—we should be obliged to forego entertainment! Doctors—O heavens! Anything the doctors pleased for the doctors! That was certain after the awful bills for Geraldine's gripe! And other emergencies!

And against the fearful total, what? Dear old John, practicing in his little Southern town—John on a still, determined hunt after something connected with malaria and the malaria mosquito, but meantime eking out existence by general practice—why, good old John could spare us five dollars a week; and father, boarding at Cousin Kate's in Salesport, could spare us out of his annuity another five. Unless I could do something—something—

"Mr. Bromley says he will see you now," announced the chieftain of the tow-headed boys.

I awoke from addition and subtraction. I noticed that Mr. Sawtelle had not emerged—at least I hadn't seen him! And then, marveling somewhat at the shakiness of my legs, I followed down the dusty, dusky hall to a room at the end of it.

It was a mere cubby-hole of a room, with a huge roll-top desk almost filling it, with only one chair, in which the redoubtable Bromley himself sat, almost submerged, as it were, under a rising sea of newspapers. Leaning against the desk was Mr. Sawtelle, his eyes fixed on the door by which I entered. He made as if to leave, but Bromley stayed him with a gesture.

"That's all right, Sawtelle. I won't be a minute. You wish to see me?" This to me, with a rather ferocious frown. He rumpled the papers on his desk in search of my slip. "Ah, yes, here it is. About a contribution—Where y'going, Sawtelle?"

"I'll be back," murmured Sawtelle, considerably vanishing. I blessed him in my heart, and extended my roll.

"I—I wanted to see if you could use that," I began. "Or if you thought it gave sufficient promise so that you could give me work regularly—"

"Don't you know enough not to roll a manuscript?" he asked gruffly.

He smoothed it out with rough fingers, and I began to apprehend what manner of man he was; until now he had been a blur of indescribable rudeness before my eyes. A man sitting while I stood suppliant before him! Now I saw that he was sturdily built, with a short neck on which his head was thrust belligerently forward; that his shoulders were broad, his skin burned a brickish red; that his eyes, beneath an overshadowing forehead, were gray, forbidding—as if they were a wall that he opposed to you, defying you to penetrate behind its hard surface. He rang a bell impatiently, and thrust my unfortunate contribution into the hand of the office boy who appeared in response to the summons.

"Here," he said—only it sounded less like "here" than "hyar," delivered with a snarl—"ask Mrs. Woolson to look at that, and to talk with this young lady. That's all." He nodded to me. "Good day. Tell Mr. Sawtelle I'm at liberty."

The last was for Mercury. I set my teeth hard behind my lips to keep them from quivering. I inclined my head in farewell civility, which Mr. Bromley, already deep in some fresh, wet afternoon editions that had been thrust upon his desk, did not see, and I followed toward Mrs. Woolson's quarters.

Mrs. Woolson was a widow, I inferred from her black garb. She was a pretty one, as all widows should be—a woman of thirty-five or six, I thought, with smooth, shining chestnut hair, smooth, rounded, rosy cheeks, clear, smiling eyes, white teeth, and plump arms and throat beneath her soft, black silk blouse. She greeted me with a smile of seeming cordiality, even before she heard my name. Then she exclaimed with added fervor:

"Miss Alcott? Are you related to the beautiful Miss Alcott who is a protégée of dear Miranda Fenwick-Hall's?" She spoke with great vivacity.

"I am Geraldine Alcott's sister," I answered.

I could scarcely enter upon a recital, with this utter stranger, of the events that had rendered Geraldine no longer a protégée of dear Miranda Fenwick-Hall's. She received the information with friendly rapture; she almost purred over me. She smoothed out my luckless manuscript without comment upon the awful, amateur fact of its rolling; she ran it through with practiced eye, my heart beating unsteadily all the while.

"Have you been writing long?" she asked, when she had finished. She fixed me with her bright, inquisitive, friendly glance.

"I've been doing things for two years," I admitted, with a sudden, retrospective vision of the two years' loneliness that had driven me to writing as to an opiate. "But this is the first thing I've tried to publish. I thought it might do on the 'Home Half Page,'" I ended tremulously.

"It will do very well for that," stated the Olympian Mrs. Woolson calmly; thus unruffledly do the gods apportion human destinies! "With one or two changes—you'll let me make them?—it will do admirably for the 'Home Half Page.' Have you," she ended smilingly, "any more at home like these?"

My head reeled with happiness. I could scarcely believe my good fortune. I scarcely know what I said. I only know that I went out of the office of the editor of the *Morning Courier's* "Home Half Page" dizzy with the thought that I was to be a "regular contributor" to it. And not until three months had passed did I have the slightest suspicion that this happy fact was due to anything other than my surpassing literary gifts as revealed in my little sketch. Later I knew that it was due to Mrs. Woolson's mad social aspirations and to the even madder delusion that she thought my close relationship to Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's gifted protégée might help her! But by that time, fortunately, the knowledge could not hurt me quite as it might have hurt at first.

But now I must go back to the events that had led up to my appearance in

the office of the *Morning Courier*. Geraldine, after Dirk had broken our engagement and had hustled angrily off to the West, had lost no time in putting through her New York project. I have never been able to analyze my sister very well; I have never known what part of her strategic campaigns to ascribe to instinct, to temperament, and what to carefully laid plan. So that I do not know whether her instinct told her that it would be unwise to delay our departure from Salesport until I had had time to savor the loneliness of my familiar life suddenly stripped of its hopes and prospects, suddenly saddened even in its memories; or whether reason told her; or whether that arch-arbiter of fate, Mrs. Fenwick-Hall, was her informant.

I only know that Dirk had scarcely had time to reach Wyoming, that my anger at his overbearing attitude had barely begun to merge into the spirit that sought excuses for him, that whispered that love, not lack of love, had dictated his course, that began faintly to cherish new hopes, to look forward to new understandings—that these things had scarcely had time to develop before we were all ruthlessly uprooted, and Geraldine and I were established in a boarding house of Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's recommendation on Madison Avenue. We were all criminally malleable in her hands—Jerry's—so much, of course, I know now. But how far she understood her power, how far she exercised it deliberately, I have never quite determined. Anyway, if she had grown to be a woman ruthless in her calm insistence upon the preeminence of her claims upon life, above all those of all others, it was our work!

During those two years in the boarding house on Madison Avenue, I had ample leisure to ponder the subject. As far back as I could remember, Geraldine had been indulged. That is often the lot of the youngest child in a family where children have not come so rapidly that the youngest has only the weary remnants of parental affection and care; and in our family, six years

had elapsed between my birth and Geraldine's, so that a baby had come as a happy novelty once more, and mother had not been too tired with her last nursing to enjoy again the rapture of a child against her breast.

And I had been of an age to adore the baby as if she had been a new and splendid variety of doll. I had had no greater pride in those early days than to push Geraldine's baby carriage through the elm-shaded streets of our block, and to have my mother's friends stop my stately march to say, with sympathetic, admiring smiles: "How is your baby to-day, Amy?" I had been eaten up with conceit when once a lady, unknown in our town, stopped me to exclaim with a little, poignant cry that I had not understood, in spite of her mourning robes: "Oh, my dear, what a lovely baby! What a lovely, strong-looking, little baby!"

Even father, though he had only a vague, mild, though friendly, interest in his offspring, had been proud of Geraldine and the stir she created. We all had felt that such an unusual, such a beautiful, such a winning infant must be reserved by fate for some high destiny. And we all had proceeded to assist fate in the reservation.

That, I suppose, is why Geraldine was not apprenticed to the dish towel, at the age of seven, as I had been; that is why grandma did not place steel knitting needles in her fingers as soon as she was able to hold them; that is why the dull mysteries of the seam, the hem, the running stitch, and the back stitch had not been unfolded to her by the time she was ten.

About that period she had lost the exquisite baby prettiness that had made her daily airing such a triumphal progress through the town in her infancy, and she had not begun to gain the splendid loveliness of her later years. So that she might have been abruptly and rudely introduced to the ordinary routine of female education as practiced in Salesport, had she not suddenly begun to show a marked musical talent. It was beautifully timed! Almost simultaneously with mother's

astonished declaration that she didn't see what she had been thinking of to let Jerry attain the age of ten without acquaintance with the dishpan, came the discovery that Jerry's fingers were fit for better things.

I had been conscientiously "taking" from Miss Amanda Dobson for three years, and I am obliged to admit that only Miss Amanda's desperate need of my small tuition fee could ever have kept her at her task. I played the piano as if it were a tin pan; she told me so once, in a moment of extreme exasperation. And I can do her the justice to say, after these years, that she was right. Discord was not discord in my ears, nor was harmony harmony. Laboriously I tried to follow the notes that gentlemen and ladies conversant with the possible combinations of the funny, little black clubs had arranged; but there was nothing to guide me but my eyes and my memory. My ears did not help me; my fingers did not have that sensitiveness to which the wrong note would have been a scorching signal.

Then one day, after the family had suffered for three years, hopefully, trustfully, under my daily half hour of practice, suddenly a true, delicate rendition of something I had been maltreating on the piano sounded through the house. It was Geraldine, who had not yet begun to "take," playing by ear.

Mother was overjoyed; father was pleased, and his manner said that the happy discovery was a logical result of his never-worry policy. Poor Miss Amanda shed tears of joy; she had a real feeling for music, which must have been hourly crucified in the Salesport of my youth. And Geraldine was duly and formally released from the customary female indenture to dull household tasks, and was bound over, instead, to music for a term of years.

At first our anticipations were modest; we thought that when she had reached the proper age for such a procedure, she would take Miss Amanda's place in the melodic training of the young. She would give lessons, and



Geraldine unpinned her big hat and threw it, with the gesture of one to whom panamas are nothing, upon the sofa.

would help swell the family exchequer, which was likely to be sadly in need of inflation as the years went on. Then it began to appear that her talent was too great to be hidden under the extinguishing bushel of village music teaching. She would be a pianist—one of those fortunate beings who swept regally across concert-hall platforms, regardless of dust upon satin trains; one of the blest to whom perspiring ushers staggered with great baskets of flowers at the close of each number. She would play before kings, perhaps, and potentates assuredly. And she must be trained for that end exclusively, and not for the common lot of woman—not for the humdrum lot whose two watchwords are work and sacrifice.

Because her fingers must be supple for their work, they were never taught to be busy with another task; because practicing was laborious, no other labor was required of her. Because beauty, scarcely less than talent, was a public

woman's asset, she was spared all disfiguring tasks. And because she was to be saved, reserved, set aside, for a brilliant future in which we were all to benefit, we must wait upon her, hand and foot, now! That was the principle upon which our household was run all the years from the discovery of Geraldine's talent until the day when Mrs. Fenwick-Hall proclaimed an even rarer gift than the great pianist's to be hers.

No, I cannot say, whatever plans and hopes of mine had been obliterated under the Juggernaut car of Geraldine's career, that she herself was to blame, or the nature that made her. I think that the family was hideously to blame—the family that discriminated among talents and gifts, declaring this one higher, worthier than that; the family that was not farsighted enough to know when it had begun to rear a Frankenstein for its own undoing!

I, invading the office of the *Morning Courier*, was still under the old spell.

Geraldine's voice must be trained to the utmost demand of the masters and the connoisseurs! Geraldine's person and her personality must still be sacred—the one to be daintily nourished, tended like a princess', garbed finely and richly; the other to be allowed to flower without dwarfing, without blighting influence. Geraldine's favorite poem began: "Vex not thou the poet's soul with cares." And "poet" she interpreted as "artist," artist in turn as singer, and singer, of course, as Geraldine Alcott, between whom and a dizzying, glorious appearance in opera—so the wiseacres said—lay only another year in New York and two in Paris!

When the breaking of my engagement with Dirk was followed by our immediate hegira to New York, Mrs. Fenwick-Hall was disposed to be very gracious to me. She commended my course—it showed, she said, proper family feeling, proper womanly pride, and the spirit of sacrifice without which woman's character was an arid waste. Moreover, she was quite certain—if I happened to care about that!—that my conduct must in time impress my impetuous lover and send him back to me even more ardent, more admiring than before. I rather thought that myself!

She felt herself responsible for Geraldine's career, she said, and she meant to provide for her education properly. She intended to make her an allowance to cover her living expenses, her dress, and her music lessons in New York. I was included in the living expenses. In return, she wanted nothing but the glory of having discovered the golden marvel of the age. It was all very pretty, and though I was seared and scorched with humiliation at the thought of living upon the woman's bounty, I was so schooled in the creed that Geraldine's career took precedence over all other things—even instinctive self-respect and independence—that I acceded.

She gave us an allowance of sixty dollars a week, and she gave my sister a great deal besides—clothes, opera seats, excursions, tickets, introductions,

society, patronage. In return, hers was the only house in which Geraldine would sing. Sometimes I have thought that Mrs. Fenwick-Hall drove a thrifty bargain for her three thousand dollars a year—especially since we boarded with a woman who had been a poor connection of the late Mr. Fenwick-Hall's, and who had to be "carried" to a certain extent upon the pay roll of his estate. As for Geraldine, she accepted the favors with a superb air of giving full value—with perhaps a little extra—for them. We had all trained her so well to believe in the surpassing greatness of her gift to society!

After Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's first approval of my course in staying by my sister through the years of training, she seemed to forget my existence. Occasionally she sent me a card to a private art show or to some charity performance for which she had been forced, in the character of patroness, to buy a lot of tickets. She also sent me an invitation to a luncheon once, and once to a crush musicale at which Geraldine sang divinely. But Geraldine was constantly at her house, and it gradually came about that she was much at the houses of Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's friends, also. It was not to be wondered at—she was beautiful enough to be invited merely for the picture that she made, I thought. But in addition to that, she was designed to be a celebrity. They all believed it. And I was kept fairly busy at home, in my room on Madison Avenue, in refurbishing her clothes.

I was not angry or resentful at the conspicuous neglect of Jerry's patron. I did not particularly like that dominant, regally rude, magnificent old dowager. I had what I had never had before—leisure for reading, leisure for study. John, from out of the infinitesimal returns from his practice, sent me enough to enable me to take a few courses at Barnard, and my days, though lonely, were by no means unhappy. It was then that the desire to write first began to stir in me, and while Geraldine was off at dinner and

opera, at theater and supper, I potted away at my little secret sheaf of papers.

Probably it was my absorption in them that made me so blind to the gradual change in Jerry. Not until the storm burst upon our heads did I have the slightest doubt that she was entirely, even if selfishly, devoted to her own ambition; or perhaps I should say never did I doubt that her ambition was to be a great singer. And then, one autumn afternoon, my eyes were rudely opened.

I had been up at Barnard, and had walked down the Drive to Seventy-second Street for delight in the crisp, sparkling air, the blue, dancing river, the sense of freshness and vigor in the world. Then I climbed on top of a Fifth Avenue bus and rode down the crowded, glittering, gay thoroughfare of wealth, enthralled, as always, by the spectacle of brilliant, teeming life that it presents. It was, therefore, after the luncheon hour when I reached our boarding house. Geraldine was spending a few days at Greenwich with some acquaintances she had lately made.

I was astonished, when I entered the wide, dim hall of Mrs. Charterid's impeccable establishment, to see Mrs. Fenwick-Hall seated, in a dignity that I felt, even across the intervening spaces, to be furious, in the long drawing-room. She summoned me with an imperious gesture which I obeyed quakingly, I knew not why.

"I have been waiting for you an hour and a half." She hurled the information at me.

"I am very sorry," I replied wonderingly, "to have kept you waiting; but you see I was not expecting you."

She glared at me. Then she snapped: "We may go to your room, I suppose? I don't care to confide my affairs to all of Mabel's paying guests."

"By all means," I answered.

I led the way to my fourth-story room, and, bewildered and alarmed though I was, I managed to extract a certain joy from the sound of Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's panting ascent. I moved before her with an exaggerated

suppleness and lightness, an emphasized straightness of the back. I was glad to make her feel that there were a few things that were not purchasable with millions. When I opened the door of my tiny apartment, she sank, puffing, into the nearest chair. I pushed forward another—the other if one comes to that!—saying: "You will find this more comfortable. It is a pull, up those three flights."

She struggled to regain breath with which to smite me with some untoward news—I felt that it was untoward! And I waited her recovery with an air of polite patience.

"Are you," she rasped forth finally, "in league with that precious sister of yours?"

"I don't know what you mean." It took me a full second to force myself to speech at all; what, *what* had Geraldine been doing?

"I'll tell you!" Mrs. Fenwick-Hall spoke with vindictive emphasis. "I'll tell you! Your sister, Miss Geraldine Alcott, doesn't care for the public career we have planned for her! She prefers to be, instead of the socially acceptable opera singer, the operatically singing society leader! She has been deliberately trying to captivate my stepson before my very eyes! She thinks that she would like to step into my shoes!"

She leaned back and waited to see me wilt and die beneath her news. I admit that I was astonished, but my astonishment was not due, as Mrs. Fenwick-Hall had fondly expected, to horror at the thought of my sister's presumption. It was due to quite another cause—amazement that Geraldine, even deteriorating as she was, could think seriously of Horace Fenwick-Hall as a husband. An idler young man never cumbered this footstool of ours; a more unoriginally dissipated young man never squandered the money that his hard-working ancestors had piled up. To my mind, he even lacked the charm, the reckless fascination, that sometimes goes with rich and dissipated young men as a sort of compensation for their lack of moral

worth. I could not believe that Geraldine had reached the point of caring for Horace Fenwick-Hall.

"Oh," said I, "I think you must be mistaken, Mrs. Fenwick-Hall. I hardly think that Geraldine is in love with your stepson."

"Who said anything about her being in love?" Mrs. Fenwick-Hall snapped out at me. "I merely said that she was trying to worm her way into my position, using Horry as her tool."

"Even at that," I answered, "it seems to me quite likely that you are mistaken. You have probably been misled by their free and friendly attitude—"

"Nonsense! Don't you try to play the simpleton. I'm not judging from anybody's attitude—I'm judging only from what my stepson told me. He's in love with her, girl—infatuated—he wants to marry her!"

I admit that I was perturbed, but I fenced for time. "That proves nothing," I answered as calmly as I could. I was so utterly out of Jerry's real confidence. Could she have fallen in love with him? "A good many men have wished to marry her during this past year, Mrs. Fenwick-Hall. But, even if she does—er—reciprocate his—affection—and wishes to marry him, I fail to see why you should act in this astounding manner about it?" I faced her boldly now.

"You fail to see?" she cried. "Well, Miss Alcott, I will tell you that I have other plans for my son—he was 'son' this time!—than to have him marry a beggar. Kindly remember that I have fed and housed and clothed and educated your sister for the past four years, and that you yourself are my dependent. I will not allow him to marry a beggar—do you understand? And you are too intelligent a woman to pretend to think that your sister's conduct has been anything but despicable—despicable! She is as selfish a specimen of humanity as I have ever seen. She has developed a wonderful taste for luxury that she has not earned—you know where that taste leads personable young women! Well, let it lead where it will, I don't intend that it

shall lead her into my household! She has deceived me! She has behaved dishonorably—"

"Hush!" I interrupted her. "I will not allow you to go on like this. If my sister condescends to care for Mr. Horace Fenwick-Hall, that means that a beautiful and gifted girl condescends to care for a vapid, ambitionless young man, the laughingstock of the small part of the world that has ever heard of him—Titania for a Bottom! If she condescends to care for him, then—you make me talk snobbishly!—a well-born girl, a girl of family, cares for a parvenu! I wonder at her taste, and I will question that with you as much as you please! But I will not allow you to go on calling my sister dishonorable!"

She rose from her chair. She eyed me half amusedly, half malevolently. "You may tell your sister," she said—calmly now; was she not wielding the only lash she believed effective?—"that my doors are closed to her from to-day. Her allowance stops, of course. Horry has heard reason—he spends a hundred thousand a year and has no romantic notion of living on five with your sister in a bug-ridden, vine-covered cottage—and I'll do her the justice to say that I know she has no such notion, herself! And he has sailed for England. I will send you a statement. Doubtless a young woman of your family pride will not care to be under any obligation to parvenus like us. Of course, you are under no legal obligation." She nodded at me and went out, leaving me flayed and sore. The favor of princes! The favor of princes!

And that was why I, three days later, sat in a panic of nervousness and anxiety, waiting the pleasure of Mr. Upton Bromley, of the *Morning Courier*.

Meantime, Geraldine, on her return from Greenwich, had taken the news of Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's repudiation of her angrily, yet calmly.

"The old cat!" she said, in the simple Salesport phrase of our youth. "As if she hadn't already got a great deal more out of me than she has ever given me! I've sung thousands of dollars' worth

at her musicales for nothing. Just let her send her statement—I'll send her one in return! Why, with one Metropolitan name and me she had the most stunning musical entertainments in the city. The pig!"

"Geraldine!" I cried, appalled at what seemed to me a hideous vulgarity in my sister. "How can you speak so? How can you talk like a—oh, like a common bargainer! But—what I want to know is this—were you—er—involved with this young man?"

Jerry looked at me quizzically from under narrowed lids. She dimpled deliciously—when Jerry smiled, two deep, beautiful, little beds for kisses came at the corners of her ripe lips. Oh, she was lovely, no doubt about it!

"You dear old Donna Quixota!" she exclaimed. "You ought to live in a stained-glass window. You think I'm a vulgar wretch, don't you? Well, I dare say I am—that comes of too intimate association with that eminent patron of the arts whose sole right to patronize is her money, and who feels that it entitles her to patronize anything—art, religion, morality! Oh, don't talk to me. I'm no fool. I have seen through that purse-proud parvenu almost from the first—through her and her friends. They're all alike—some better veneered than others, that's all. But scratch deep enough, and you'll find love of money. Money, money—that's what really counts with them—not talent, not genius, not goodness, not family—nothing but their beastly money. Of course it has vulgarized me to kotow to that—deliberately and dishonestly, if you come to that!"

"As for Horry"—she half laughed and shrugged her graceful shoulders—"I was 'involved' with him to the extent that we were engaged to be married. He's no worse a fool than a lot of them," she added with infinite, complacent calmness. "But, of course, since the stepdame won't have it, that's off. I was pretty sure she wouldn't. I knew her better than he did. He thought she was mad about me. He told me that she had had lots of enthusiasms before, but never one of such intensity and

length as her enthusiasm for me and my voice. He was sure she'd agree, so I let him try it. Well"—she raised her lovely lids and stared unseeingly through the window at the crimson leaves of a frost-touched vine on a church across the street—"it does no harm to know the truth at once. Indeed, it's better."

"And—your career—for which we have all sacrificed so much"—my voice shook in spite of myself—"was that to be abandoned for a rich marriage, provided you could make it?"

"Poor Al!" sighed Geraldine lightly. "But Dirk was never worthy of you, sis—you're well rid of him. As for marriage—a good marriage—versus a career—I'm for the marriage every time! A prima donna is a slave—a slave to a hundred things. She's a slave to the weather, a slave to her health, a slave to her manager, to time-tables, to critics, to the worst thing of all—the public, with its ignorance and its darned caprices. However, don't look so stunned, Amy, my own! I'll go on with the career. I prefer it and its rewards, at any rate, to a humdrum, Salesport variety of domesticity. Besides"—she shot her half-deprecating, half-defiant roguish gleam of a smile at me again—"besides, I am sure that for me the path to a good marriage lies through my gift. And whether fortune comes by the stage or by matrimony, A, you share it!" she promised magnificently.

It was a good deal to face—the brutal flinging-off by our patron, the realization of the utter deterioration in my sister. But in regard to the latter phenomenon, I had the usual comfort of fond relatives in such crises—I told myself that "the child was only talking in that way to hide her real feelings"; that "she was only pretending to be a cynic and a mercenary"; that she was, as little boys do, whistling and strutting and swaggering ungracefully to hide real softness.

We decided, of course, that Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's defection should not drive us from New York or Geraldine from her musical education. Pride, as

well as interest, claimed so much. We gave Mrs. Charterid "notice" that day—I had already bargained with two Barnard girls who had a little apartment in one of the great honeycomb of apartment houses up near Morningside Park for two rooms in their place and the privilege of cooking in their kitchenette, which they themselves did not use, as they took their meals in one of the student boarding houses in the neighborhood. They were away all day, as were most of the other inhabitants of the building, and Jerry might practice without becoming a public nuisance. I happened to have a hundred dollars in reserve—it had been a birthday present from Cousin Judith, who said, underscoring her words, that she wished me to spend it for *myself*; and I had been hoarding it for six months trying to decide whether I wanted most a set of good furs, a lovely evening gown—though I seldom went out—or a beautiful, musty, leather-smelling, mellowed old set of Jane Austen which had tempted me every time I browsed in Scrawley's bookstore. I saw now that I wanted none of these things.

It was in giving Mrs. Charterid notice that I first learned of the financial arrangement between her and Mrs. Fenwick-Hall. The good lady—she was good and a lady, and she ran a charming boarding house of the sort to take the traditional curse off boarding houses forever—seemed genuinely sorry to have us leave. But she smiled as well as sighed when she expressed her regrets.

"They are quite apart from the battle I see ahead of me with Miranda," she said. "Whenever Miranda obtains a boarder for me—or drives a friend, acquaintance, or protégé to my house—she promptly deducts the amount I receive from that person from the sum that poor old Horatio's estate pays me. It's a horrid situation. Horatio was my cousin, you know, brought up in my home, mothered and fathered by my parents. Well, he left me as a sort of sacred, but rather loosely drawn, trust to Miranda; she was to see

to it that I had twenty-five hundred a year during my life, to be paid from whatever investments in her judgment seemed best! She's a funny creature, Miranda—she loathes paying me that twenty-five hundred worse than any other thing in the world, and is always trying to lessen the sum by sending me boarders. Not because she's ungenerous, exactly—I don't really know why. And I foresee our usual battle royal over it when you and your sister leave. However, that's not the chief reason I'm sorry! Come and see me as often as you can."

Well, that was enlightening, and, in its way, amusing. It served to lessen my searing sense of financial obligation to the eminent patron of the arts who had played fairy godmother to Jerry for a while; it turned the affair into a joke almost.

I have never been so busy—so overworked, to tell the truth—as in the period that now dawned for us. But I scarcely noticed my own fatigue, buoyed up as I was by a sense of adventure and of independence. Mrs. Woolson, thanks at first to the delusion that she cherished in regard to the social possibilities of my acquaintance with dear Miranda Fenwick-Hall, not only gave me work to do for her department of the *Morning Courier*, but took me under her professional wing, introducing me to the editor of the literary supplement of the paper, who let me review some books for him, and thrusting some of my verses under the august eye of the great Bromley himself, so that they appeared upon the editorial page, of which he was in minute charge, as well as being in general charge of the whole paper. She invited me to her apartment, too, and there I met again the engaging Mr. Dennis Sawtelle—of which, as the old books used to say, more anon. I did no reporting for the *Courier*, which was a highly conservative sheet, holding the most refined views as to the limitations of woman's sphere, especially of her newspaper work.

I used to get up at six o'clock in the morning to prepare breakfast for



"Here," he said, "ask Mrs. Woolson to look at that, and to talk with this young lady. That's all."

Jerry and myself. Pretty soon the two Barnardian landladies came sniffing to the kitchenette, entreating to be accepted as "breakfast boarders"; they said that the aroma of the coffee was too much to be resisted, and that they would not go to their chicory-serving boarding house any longer. I took them on gladly. With a little gas stove it was scarcely more work to make cereal, coffee, and toast for four than for two, and I was glad of the consequent reduction in our tiny rent. Generally Geraldine's breakfast was served to her in bed; she continued to have and to accept invitations almost as freely as before the break with dear Miranda, and she did not get up until time for her lesson, her exercises, or her practicing. By that time each day—eleven o'clock—I was busy at my beloved desk in the *Courier* office.

I used to come home about five, and

by seven dinner was ready. Sometimes my sister took it with me, quite as often she did not. In the evenings I worked again; I read the books for review, I polished off the little stanzas that brought Upton Bromley's eyes to bear upon me in such a bewildered manner—as if he were saying: "This seems to be yours, you say it is yours, and I suppose it is; but, bless my soul, who ever expected a shabby, scared, mute thing like you to have the trick of verse? And to write political quatrains that are not bad—not bad at all?"

When I wasn't reading or writing, or setting the oatmeal on to cook slowly for to-morrow morning's breakfast, I was mending my own stockings, putting chiffon roses on the toes of Geraldine's slippers, making iridescent little bands for her hair, sewing buttons on the long, white gloves that wrinkled so deliciously up her rounded arms, em-

broidering elaborate collar-and-cuff sets to brighten her plain serge morning dresses—or making those dresses, even. My own clothes I bought ready-made at the bargain sales, and Jerry also obtained a good deal of her wardrobe in that thrifty way. But her plain morning dresses I made, having early acquired the art of fitting her well. When she was home she used to watch me, sighing in pretty deprecation of her lack of little accomplishments.

Sometimes, as I have said, I went to Mrs. Woolson's apartment—a very artistic, though somewhat dingy, place on the purlieus of Washington Square. She was a Southern woman who had inherited, along with a sweet, drawling voice, and the ability to coerce, without violence, what she wanted from the world, a cook of the "mammy" type. Dinner at Mrs. Woolson's was a feast—an intimate, delightful, pretty feast. All of the *Courier* men—at least all who were among her intimates—went there constantly, with their wives, their sisters, their mothers—whatever feminine belongings they happened to have; if they had none, they passed through a period of imagining themselves in love with the pretty, silken, experienced little woman, and then they graduated into the large class of her devoted and useful friends. She told me, with her slurred, girlish accent, that "if evah she married again, it would have to be a man with money"; she had had her romance, she added with a bitterness apparent through the drawl, and I inferred that she had little belief left in that chief ingredient of novels.

Mr. Dennis Sawtelle, it seemed to me for a time, was a gentleman who might persuade her that romance and a competence need not be hopelessly divorced. He was a rather frequent guest at her house; he paid her, as he did most women, extravagant compliments which were saved from impertinence and burlesque only by the charm of his manner—friendly, merry, spontaneous, and sincere even when he was most absurd. He was an idle young man of the most bewildering multiplicity of occupations. He played polo with his own ponies,

and he yachted on his friends' crafts; he played tennis with the young, and golf with the more mature and less agile; he was a cotillion leader of renown; he spent time enough in organizing amateur theatricals for the rich to have accomplished some real work; he was constantly chronicled as "among those present." I have never known a man so unendingly in demand as best man and usher at weddings. And in the midst of the strenuous activity of his indolent days and nights, he managed, it seemed to me, to make a great deal of time for Peggy Woolson, who was only very precariously, very intermittently, on the edge of the favored circle in which he disported himself as an intimate.

But after I had known Peggy six months, and she had forgiven me because she could never ask Miranda Fenwick-Hall to dinner as a friend of her dear Geraldine and Amy Alcott's; and after she had told me all her love affairs from the time she was six, she set my mind at rest concerning Dennis Sawtelle.

"There's nothing in it for either of us, Amy dear," she said, when I had intimated that I thought him devoted to her. "He'll never marry at all unless he falls awfully in love; or unless he falls ill, by and by. He's just the sort of man to ward off matrimony until he's forty-five, and then marry a hospital nurse who has taken care of him after an automobile accident. He's a harmless trifler. He may fall in love, of course—and then he'd want to marry—want it hard. But not with me, my dear. I'm too much of a harmless trifler, myself. No—it'll be some one of the serious sort, I think. You're a serious sort, yourself, Amy," she added, beaming mischievously upon me.

I felt myself redden. It was true that I had tried to sound her on her relations with Mr. Sawtelle because I had begun, in my vanity, to imagine a something "special" in his manner to me; and I did not wish to be guilty of the remotest disloyalty to kind, ambitious, hard-working Peggy Woolson.

"Go ahead, my dear, corral and brand

him!" she advised merrily—she sometimes talked the jargon of the Texas cattle country where she had lived with her husband. "I am a good judge of men—he'll go beautifully in double harness, once he's broken to it! He's got plenty of money. Go ahead—with my blessing!"

I was twenty-eight years old when this advice was given me. The last four years of my life had been laborious, lacking in deep personal interest, lacking altogether in the stimulation of masculine admiration. From the day when Dirk had turned his accusing eyes upon me and had told me, with his shaking, angry voice, that I must chose for all time between him and Geraldine, no man had spoken a word of love to me. That which might have been the warmth, the sunshine of existence to a woman of my sort had been utterly lacking.

Long ago I had given up the hope that Dirk might come back to me. Long ago I had ceased to think that I saw him coming, in the person of every tall man in the distance; long ago I had ceased to imagine to myself the words with which he would tell me that he loved me so that he could not live without me! I had even ceased—so dulling a thing is time, so deadening is sordid anxiety—to wish to hear them! I no longer awoke, thrilling, from wild, frightened, sweet dreams of the cove and of bridals by the sea. I suppose, in short, that I had stopped loving Dirk, if, indeed, that outreaching of my untried youth toward his had been love, and not merely the material out of which love is made by life.

And Dennis Sawtelle, whose compliment to me was never to pay me any compliment in words; whose devoirs to me were never those of the gallant, but always those of the considerate friend; whose little gifts to me were never the orchids and bonbons he sent Peggy, but books whose ancient leather bindings had been worn smooth by many loving generations of readers—Dennis Sawtelle was beginning to play a part in my starved emotional life. I felt, in the bleak, New England, sensible core

of me, that he and I were no true mates; I seemed to myself, when I thought of us together, a crawling earthworm, while he seemed to me a peculiarly iridescent butterfly. Yet, since no man had made the least love to me for years, I was starved for love-making. Since no other man, except, perhaps, the always astonished Bromley, had even bothered to look at me twice, I cherished the memory of every one of Dennis' warm, cordial glances. Marriage with him—supposing he should ever come to the point of proposing to me—would mean no separation from Geraldine, I reasoned, even if she still needed my services as duenna; for this citizen of the world was in the habit, so I learned, of spending a few months now and again in this and that European city, and it would be no interference with his habits to sojourn where the necessities of Jerry's art might demand for a while.

Whether Jerry's art was to demand a sojourn abroad immediately was something of a question. Ludwig Rosenhammer, that amazing impresario who was turning the opera in America topsy-turvy about this time, had heard her sing, and he had sworn one of his great, round, picturesque oaths that she needed no European bush for her wine—that he would put her on in another year, the first truly American prima donna! Jerry, who had done a little "paid" singing since she had been dropped by Mrs. Fenwick-Hall—helping out this violinist's recital, that pianist's appearance, supplying the vocal numbers of this small orchestra's concert—decided, at Rosenhammer's urgency, to give up all that slow, laborious climb to fame. She was to reserve herself for her great, her flamingly heralded appearance in his new opera house.

"They shall watch for you as astronomers watch for the great comet!" he told her. "As they watch for the eclipses. But this shall be no eclipse, my dear Alcott! Trust Rosenhammer for that—little Rosey, who alone knows how to advertise. You do not believe

me, *hein?* Watch me, and you shall see!"

He was very convincing, and the mere fact that he had all sorts of litigation on his hands—suits for breaches of contract, injunctions against the appearance of this and that artist—kidnaped, so to speak, from rival impresarios—suits for the payment of the builders of the theaters and opera houses with which he seemed possessed to bestrew the earth—all this widely advertised litigation could not shake one's faith in his sincerity and in his capacity, when he talked to one.

Geraldine was in a flame of excitement over his promises, over the spangled hopes he waved before her dazzled eyes. All her early ambition seemed restored to her; the artistically deadening effect of the years when she had been smothered by Mrs. Fenwick-Hall's patronage, and had learned to worship the false gods of luxury and leisure rather than the artist's one true god of achievement, seemed evaporated. She worked diligently. She gave up half her social engagements; she took long, brisk walks to keep herself in condition instead of merely lying abed and allowing me to wait upon her for the same end. And she would often sit, her hands clasped about her shapely knees—Jerry was the only woman I ever knew who could look graceful with her legs crossed—looking at me with dewy, radiant eyes, and cry: "Oh, A, A! If I do land, how I shall repay you, you poor martyr, you! How I shall repay you! And I am going to land, am I not, A? Am I not?"

"Rosey thinks so," I used to answer, trying to be casual and unemotional about it all, but in reality almost as much excited as she was herself, and deeply touched by the expressions of her gratitude to me. After all, she was mother's own child! After all, life had wrought with us for the best! If she should have her success now—if in the prime of her youth and beauty, the untarnished, unworn pride of girlhood, the flower of her genius, she should have the chance for which so many struggled unavailingly, would not my

sacrifice of myself, my fostering of her selfishness, be justified? And if, upon this triumph, another should be vouchsafed! If I should learn to feel again! If the pleasant little waves of gratitude and warmth and companionability that I experienced in the gladdening society of Dennis Sawtelle should grow into a real woman's passion for a man—and a passion shared, reciprocated! If I should have, after the bare years, the life for which I felt myself best fitted—a home, a husband, children! Though I should not again know even the beginnings of love, as once I had known them, was there not a full life before me? After all, that had been a child's unripe affair, that engagement with Dirk! It need not rob me of my life! We were full of hope, Geraldine and I, during those weeks.

And then, one day after I had taken a walk with Dennis and had tried, with conscientious effort, to persuade myself that I could learn to care for him, the elegant, pleasant trifler, with a whole heart, and that it would gratify more than my sense of vanity to win him away from the other women who might care to win him, I came home to find Geraldine sitting in the little drawing-room of the apartment—it had been altogether ours during the past six months of our prosperity and hope—her face gray, her lips drawn, her body limp. I thought of calamity to father or to John—I had not yet learned Geraldine well enough to know that only calamity to herself could so profoundly move her.

"What is it?" I cried. "Father? John?"

She turned reproachful eyes upon me. "Look at that. Haven't you seen it?" she demanded. She thrust a crumpled afternoon paper before my eyes. In large type across a double column ran the words:

ROSENHAMMER YIELDS.

RETIRES FROM OPERA PRODUCTION.

Below was printed the story of his agreement with the rival musical interests of the city to give up all the

musical undertakings in which he was interested in the United States and Canada. And his own confirmation of the news was given in a report obtained from him in his stateroom on board the outgoing *Lusitania* that morning! He was sailing for Europe for a year's rest.

I gave the paper back to her, with some weak words about the unreliability of newspaper reports. But she had already verified the tale through one of his secretaries.

"Even so, Jerry dear," I said, standing beside her and laying my fingers upon her bright hair, "it is not the end of the world, you know. There is still all that you hoped for—there is still the Metropolitan——"

"Only after a European success!" Geraldine answered lugubriously. "Those men aren't the splendid gamblers that Rosenhammer is. No—all the months we've been believing in him were wasted. I should have been in Paris or Rome or Munich. Or I should have been married——" She fell into a profounder melancholy.

"We'll go abroad in the autumn!" I cried fervently. I did not quite see how we were to manage it, but I felt the enthusiasm that moves mountains of obstacles. "We'll go—— Oh, Jerry, you shall have your triumph! See!"—I added, turning the paper upside down in my eagerness—"see! It says here that after he has had a long rest, Rosenhammer may enter the field of European production. Think of it, Jerry—he may be your first impresario yet, and you may come back to the Metropolitan from a triumph under him in—oh, anywhere! Rome, Naples, Dresden!"

"And I may go into musical comedy to make enough to pay my board!" she interjected bitterly. "And in musical comedy, a past is of more use than a future! And I hate pasts. Oh, by the way"—her voice changed slightly; it was still bored, still pessimistic, but no longer personally so—"it seems that Dirkman Kidder has been here—speaking of pasts. The hallboy gave me his card."

She found it on the table and handed it listlessly to me. My fingers were suddenly like ice as I took it, and read, in neat English block letters:

Mr. Dirkman Kidder, Twin Peaks Ranch, Cobalt, Wyoming.

CHAPTER IV.

He had forgiven me—forgiven me with the whole-souled completeness of the man who has long since ceased to feel the slightest twinge from a wound. He was inclined to treat the memory of our engagement and of our parting in much the same manner as he treated recollections of our remote childhood—the time he was whipped for teaching me to climb the roof of the L from the apple tree, the time when I, in a burning zeal for art, painted his face with sumac and he remained a purply-spotted monstrosity for weeks.

I do not mean to say that he actually brought up the subject of our engagement and burlesqued it in reminiscence; I do not mean that I actually asked for his forgiveness, and thus assured myself of his present amiable indifference to me. But it was all evident, notwithstanding. He came to visit us not because he wanted to resume the relations of six years ago, but because he thought kindly of the relations of sixteen and twenty-six years ago! He was East on business—important business. He was immersed in important affairs; but he had a fondness for the friends of his childhood, and so, learning in Salesport from father and Cousin Kate where Jerry and I were to be found, he came to call on us. And missing us at first, he telephoned, almost before I had recovered from the shock of his presence in town, to know when he might come again. He came the next evening.

Geraldine was not at home. She was in a bad mood. All the discipline, bodily and intellectual, to which she had subjected her luxury-loving soul during the months of exaltation and hope under Rosenhammer's spell, she had flung aside immediately. She had re-



"They'll wilt before you get home," he told me. "But I had a fancy to see you among them."

established prompt connection with all the idlers whom she had been conscientiously avoiding; she had become irritable, reckless—a spoiled child showing her displeasure with the cosmos by an attack of naughtiness. And on the evening when Dirk first came to see us and to teach me how thorough his cure had been, she was booked for a dinner at a noisy restaurant with some of the less magnificent of her rich acquaintances, to be followed by the theater and a supper in a restaurant famous for the daring of its cabaret show.

But I was not alone when my old lover arrived. Dennis Sawtelle had dropped in on his way somewhere—so he said; and though Morningside

Heights seemed somewhat out of the usual line of Mr. Sawtelle's travel, I didn't question him as to his route.

They were very unlike. Dirk big, hearty, boyish and manly both—a person upon whom, I felt, one might lean; handsome, too, as he had not been in his restless, dissatisfied youth; all Western now, with the air of outdoor spaces about him. And Dennis, slight, casually cordial, witty, at ease, one of the less debased products of money and clubs, of idleness, and women's petting, his native powers subordinated to trifling ends for so long that they had been atrophied in the process. When I sat in the little room with the two of them, my whole soul rose in revolt against what I had been deliberately

trying to persuade myself to—namely, a marriage with the lesser man. That evening—that little half hour when they sat, taking, despite the quick, responsive courtesy of their attitudes, shrewd stock of each other—opened my eyes to my own demands.

Dennis, after making, in his charming, indolently genial way, an engagement with the Westerner for his club the next afternoon, went on to the place where his agreeable, idle talents were awaited, and Dirk and I turned to look at each other. In the deep, unruffled friendliness of his eyes, in the very warmth of his manner, I read his release from the young love that had once troubled him. I read it with a stormy desire to fight against his freedom; I read it with an ambition to bring him again to my feet.

I don't think that I was still in love with him—if, indeed, I ever had been in love with him! But—why deny it?—I was ripe for marriage; I wanted that sort of domesticity that no merely feminine household is able to achieve; I wanted the settled comfort, the intimacy, the security of marriage. Geraldine was almost beyond need of me; daily I was farther pushed out of her life, more ignored in her plans, except for momentary splendid visions of gratitude. I wanted my own life, and for me, what life was there but the satisfied life of the heart? I so earnestly wanted to be married that I had flogged myself, almost, into believing that I could learn to care deeply, satisfyingly for the first and only man who had seemed drawn to me since my girlhood.

And just one half hour's contrast of Dennis Sawtelle with the manlier, robust hero of my girlhood's little, abortive romance had shown me that I could never work myself up into a contented caring for him. Suddenly I saw myself as unwomanly, brazenly, scarletly indecent, for the intention I had cherished for revamping old emotions for a newcomer, of warming up my recollections of the few thrilling days with Dirk to serve Dennis!

No, having again seen in the flesh the one man who had ever really stirred

my pulses, the emotional flagellations through which I had put myself in an endeavor to feel my pulses stirred by another seemed wicked, useless, indelicate. And yet, you understand, it was not that I felt myself in love with Dirk; it was only that he taught me I could never delude myself into thinking myself in love with Dennis! And yet I wanted to be married—I wanted my man, my home, my children, my own deep springs of life!

Of course, I did not analyze myself thus, then. Of course, I was not aware of all my revulsions and propulsions at the moment. It is only that, on looking back at my past life, I see what forces were struggling in me as I sat and talked with Dirk, as I accepted his invitation for a downtown luncheon the next day, as I restlessly remembered, that night upon my bed, the other night when we had been on the verge of mighty experiences, of mighty emotions. And I see, too, what force was directing me when, a few days later, I refused Dennis Sawtelle's offer of marriage.

Dennis, who was one of the kindest of men, capable of infinite trouble over nothing, took a kindly interest in the matter of my education in art, and had called for me at the office to go with him to the exhibition of a painter friend of his. The *Courier* office was still downtown, in the old Park Row neighborhood, and we had a long, twisting ride in a taxi, which was Dennis' favorite means of locomotion, before we emerged into Washington Square, feathery green and fresh with new spring leaves, sparkling with its fountain, and running over, as usual, with nursemaids and babies. Just beside the arch stood a flower huckster's cart, bright with jonquils and narcissus. Dennis stopped the cab to buy me a load of them.

"They'll wilt before you get home," he told me. "But I had a fancy to see you among them." He turned his smiling eyes upon me with ready admiration. "I don't believe I've ever given you any flowers before, have I? And now, from a street huckster's supply!

Did any one ever tell you that you have yellow and tawny lights in your eyes, for all their sweet, saintly dovelikeness? No? Not even that splendid old friend of yours who had years and years in which to make discoveries about your eyes before I had ever seen them? Well, he's duller than he seemed!"

He stopped his chatter as we drew up before the dealer's in which his new enthusiasm's work was displayed. And in another second or two we were upstairs, in the long, dim, almost prayerfully quiet gallery. We made the round of the rooms once, and he called my attention, with his air of a connoisseur, to what he considered the particular points of excellence in the canvases. Then he said, in a voice subtly changed:

"Come, let us sit down for a minute on that brown settee in the little room where no one seems to be going. I have something to say to you."

I went obediently to the little brown settee, and sat facing a large canvas, which I have always remembered—a picture of a great, green comber rolling in toward a strip of glaring sand under the hottest blue sky I have ever seen.

For a moment after we were seated, Dennis did not speak. Then he remarked: "I don't care for beauties." I looked at him, laughing, and he smiled in response, but he maintained his position. "I mean it—I don't like beauties. I adore beauty, and I adore it especially in a woman; but a beauty has ceased to be a woman—she's nothing but an incarnate piece of egoism. Peggy Woolson threatened me with falling in love with your sister; I told her I shouldn't. I told her I had had better taste than to fall in love with a beauty since I was twenty. Then it was one of the English professional brand that made mincemeat of my heart! Since then—ah, since then. Amy, I should like to think that I had never played at falling in love at all until I fell truly, unfathomably, inextricably in love with you! You knew it, didn't you?"

He ceased, and looked at me with the same pleasant, admiring, unimpassioned

gaze that he always wore. But he was a trifle pale.

"You knew it, didn't you?" he went on, after a second, with a faint urgency in his voice. "You meant me to fall in love with you, didn't you?"

"No, no!" I cried furiously, reddening. I could not face that accusation calmly—it was far too true. "Of course, I have been glad of your—your liking——" I stumbled on, trying to compromise with the truth.

"I am glad of that. It is entirely yours. And a great deal more is yours. I—Amy, I am thirty-eight, and I cannot pretend that my heart is a virgin book, opened for the first time. But I can tell you, truthfully, that I have not wanted to marry any woman for many and many a year. You'll think me a doting sentimentalist when I tell you that you remind me, in some dim, delicately sweet way, of my mother——"

I bit my lip to keep back a smile; it was one of Peggy Woolson's axioms that no man ever makes serious love to a woman without telling her, at some point in the process, that she reminds him of his mother! Dennis interpreted my expression correctly.

"You are laughing at me for a blithering ass," he said cheerfully. "We all do it, don't we? Never mind—it's true! Well, Amy—have I any show?"

"Oh, Dennis!" I cried, abject now. "I am so sorry—I am so unhappy! But—I shall never marry. I shall never care for any one that way!" It seemed to me only fair to promise that, so guiltily conscious was I of the atmosphere of invitation in which I had sought to envelop myself for him.

"My dearest girl! Don't doom yourself to perpetual spinsterhood just because you are sorry for me." He forced a smile, and the pleasant light in his kind eyes was not clouded for an instant, but he was gray now beneath his city pallor. "I—think I made a mistake in bothering you to-day. I had intended—a longer wooing, my dear, to tell the truth. But—I think it was that delightful fellow I met at your house the other night who made me

rush you in a panic of fright lest he grab you first! Sometimes poor old Bromley's eyes, devouring you, have given me the same feeling of the necessity of haste; but I have thought of his poor wife and his high principles, and have regained courage to be leisurely."

"His poor wife?"

I passed over the absurdities of Dennis' speech. He was as grotesque—as madly grotesque—in his imputation of emotion to Bromley, as of danger to his own hopes from Dirkman Kidder. But I didn't want to argue with him about that. I wanted to know about my grim, gray editor's wife. I had not known that he was married. Indeed, I knew almost nothing of him.

"Yes. Poor soul!" Dennis spoke with facile sympathy. "She's in an asylum, incurably insane."

"Oh!" I moaned.

"It's horrible," went on Dennis. He seemed to want to talk, to regain possession of himself. "He married when he was a mere boy. The taint was in her blood, but her mother, a calculating devil, managed the thing swiftly and secretly. Bromley had a little money and a promising position. He was much in love, and saw in the girl's moods and vagaries only lovable, feminine quirks—we're such asses, when we're in love, Amy, my dear! And her terrific outbursts of exaction and jealousy, when they were first married, meant nothing—well, nothing diseased—to him. I believe they used to have a fiendish time. That is one of the things poor old Bromley reproaches himself for—that he didn't understand her, supposed her outbursts to be merely a normal person's unrestrained temper, and—oh, well, fought her back, by and by, with her own weapons, and worse—with biting satire and cruel tongue-lashing and with contemptuous silence and absence from his home. That's the thing that torments him now. She's been out there at the asylum for five years now—and he goes to see her once a week! Cheerful way for a hard-working man to spend his day off, isn't it?"

I could only murmur another "oh" of inarticulate pity and horror. What a life, what a life!

"So you see why I haven't allowed myself to be too greatly hurried by poor Bromley's eyes following you around as if he couldn't quite believe you true. And—haven't I been too precipitate, Amy? If I gave you a little longer——"

The little room was empty. He learned toward me, his gaze on the two women who were making a slow progress around the outer gallery; their backs were toward us, and he took my hand.

"Is there no use in my waiting, Amy? Or would it only bother your kind heart to think of me as still hoping, still hanging on?"

Heaven knows I wanted to care for him! Life with him would be so serene, so delicately, gracefully, kindly sheltered! But when I felt my hand cool, indifferent in his clasp, and when, staring at the great, green comber painted on the canvas opposite me, I seemed to see, instead, the sea at Salesport, the long line of waves lapping the beach at the cove, and felt again, for one stinging second, the expectant happiness that had surged through me at Dirk's touch—a thousand years ago!—I knew that I could not care for him. My eyes were wet as I turned to tell him so. I could not speak.

"Never mind, dearest child!" he said, and released my hand with a final pressure. "You and I are going to keep on being the best friends—and you'll buy my bride a far too expensive wedding present, and I'll be an usher at your wedding, and everything shall go on delightfully, just as if I hadn't bothered you with this offer of a somewhat shop-worn heart!"

I laughed a little through my mist of tears. How dear and thoughtful he was in spite of his indolence, his trifling! If only I could have loved him! If only Dirk had not elected to come East and reawaken my youth at just that moment! I was never quite so near to being in love with Dennis Sawtelle as when he left me at the door of my

apartment house that day; I felt sentimental about it until I recalled that the fountainhead of amatory wisdom in my acquaintance, Mrs. Woolson, had declared as a dictum that a woman could always persuade herself she was in love with a man the instant after she had rejected him.

"I met Dirk Kidder downtown today," announced Geraldine, who was, as it chanced, at home. "I took lunch with him at Sherry's. Has he told you, A, that his party is to run him for Congress next fall? Isn't it wonderful—Dirk Kidder in Congress!"

"He isn't there yet," I remarked, not quite amiably.

Still under the spell of a lesser man's personality, I felt, unconsciously, a sort of dim resentment of men of achievement! It was ridiculous—here was Dirk spoiling Dennis Sawtelle for me, and here was Dennis, in turn, spoiling Dirk! And besides, he had not told me of his congressional possibilities.

"He's made an awful lot of money," went on Jerry. "Did he tell you that he was here to interest some Eastern capitalists in mining property? They have a wonderful mine out there, he and his associates, and he says that if they can get the money to work it, it will mean millions and millions for everybody connected with it."

"That would be nice," I replied idiotically, only half hearing her as I looked through some mail.

Suddenly she disturbed my inattention by a long, rippling laugh—a laugh as melodious as her singing. I turned toward her to learn the cause of her mirth, and, as so often happened, I was smitten afresh, sharply, with the perception of her beauty. Her arms, from which the lacy sleeves of a negligee had slipped back, were clasped behind her bright head; they were as rounded, as tender, as a sculptor's dream of a nymph's arms. Her bare throat was exquisite; her color—that shimmering combination of coppery gold, of rose, and sapphire, and ivory—was dazzling. My heart throbbed with a vicarious vanity. What a marvel she would be, what a sensation she would create, with

that rare and perfect beauty and that rare and perfect voice, once she made her appearance!

"What are you laughing at?" I asked her, when I had feasted my eyes on her for a second, and had taken almost a mother's joy in her—after all, had not my sacrifices helped to create her as she was?

"I saw 'dear Miranda' at Sherry's," she explained. "She hobbled over to our table to speak to me. She treated Dirk much as if he were a deaf mute or something else as negligible. She said she had been ashamed of herself for a long time, and that this seemed as good a time as any to tell me so and to ask my pardon! I gave it to her as graciously as you can imagine. I said"—Geraldine sat up and assumed the blandly innocent look with which she had met her former patron's new advances—"I said that there could be no talk of apology from her to me—that she was always my benefactress, whatever she might try to think herself, especially for her stand in that silly affair with Horry. And then she told me that Horry was going to be married in two or three weeks to an English 'Honorable Evelyn' or something! And I answered, as sweetly as possible, rather like a maiden aunt, you know, that I was so glad his affair with that Belgian dancer had been ended—and that I supposed the newspaper reports of it had been horribly exaggerated, anyway! Then she laughed and asked me to come to see her."

"You wouldn't go?" I cried breathlessly.

"Why not? What's the use of cherishing animosities against persons who may be useful to you? What's proper pride but a rather poor sauce to starvation? I'll go and see her any time it seems to me profitable to go."

As usual, I comforted myself with the thought that Jerry liked to talk with a crude commercialism, but that it was quite impossible she could really feel anything of the sort. She had merely picked up the jargon of the vulgar while she consorted with them

under the leadership of Mrs. Fenwick-Hall; but at heart she must always be an Alcott, of Salesport, and true daughter of the dear soul who used to sweeten her unflavored viands with the reflection: "So long as we have one another, what does anything matter?" And even while I was telling the part of my mind that criticized Jerry how blameless she must, of necessity, be at the core, she looked at me, with a long, deliberative glance.

"Are you, by any pleasant chance, going to have the good sense to marry Dennis Sawtelle when he asks you?" she interpreted the stare.

I felt myself hot beneath her inquisitive eyes. I had never confided to Geraldine, whom I felt immeasurably my junior, any of the feelings that I cherished toward any one; I resented her intrusion into an intimacy that should be entered only upon invitation.

"He hasn't asked you already!" she cried incredulously, reading my expression somewhat differently from the way in which I had intended.

"My dear girl," I answered somewhat tartly, "there are some things that I think don't bear discussion."

"Fiddle!" cried Geraldine musically. "Fiddle, fiddle, fiddle! You talk like Cousin Judith at her most Victorian, or dear mother at her most other-worldly. Everything is the better for discussion—for an airing. There are no sacred reticences—the dark corners of one's mind don't breed any sort of sacrednesses! But what I want to know is if you are going to marry him? He'll ask you the minute you give him a chance—and I'd rather like him for a brother-in-law!"

"That's a consideration that would have great weight with me!" I scoffed.

"Well, it ought to have," answered Geraldine seriously. "But—are you going to? I have sometimes marveled," she went on with the amazing candor that never ceased to startle me, so different was it from my spirit of concealment, "why he fell in love with you instead of with me. But, after all, I think to a somewhat jaded palate, like Dennis', you would be rather the more

piquant morsel. You see, essentially, I'm only a handsome creature with a voice—he's seen my type, on the stage and in society, forever and ever. But here you are, a nice blend of saint and aristocrat and hard-working woman—and quite lovely to look at, A, my dear!—and he has the discrimination to prefer you. But don't be foolish on that account! Not many men have such good taste. Most of them take their beauties as they do their other wares, on the largest advertiser's word. Are you going to take him?"

"I am not, since you persist in your impertinent probing."

"Oh, Amy!" There was really a long wail of sorrow in her golden voice. "And why not? He'd be such a good match for you—and such a comfortable brother-in-law for little sister!"

"Because I am not in love with him," I snapped.

"Have you already refused him?" There was real consternation in her manner now.

"Yes."

"Oh, you idiot! You poor, romantic idiot!" She gazed at me with pity and contempt and a little anger. "For, you know, he'll never ask you again!"

"I don't want him to," I asseverated.

"More imbecile you!" She brooded silently upon me for a minute. Then she said, more hesitantly now: "Amy—tell me—and forgive me if I offend you—you aren't still in love with Dirk, are you?"

"Geraldine, I will not submit to this for another minute," I cried stormily. "You are impertinent and tasteless, and you must confine your tastelessness to your own affairs."

"Oh, Amy, Amy! I do believe you still care for him."

"I do not!" I cried, stung into the denial by I hardly know what swelling of anger. "I don't suppose I ever was in love with him! We were a pair of children—it was a rehearsal of love, not love itself!"

She watched me deeply, gravely for a minute. Then she sighed.

"I hope that is true," she said. "I

hope it is true. And I am awfully sorry about Dennis. He's a dear fellow."

"He is, indeed," I agreed heartily. I meant it sincerely. And from thinking about what a dear fellow he was, I began to think of the ill-assorted friendship between him and Upton Bromley; and thence to the horrible tale he had told me of my editor's life. No wonder the man's face was seamed with lines that were not of age, that his hair was whitened in queer streaks, startling in the midst of his dense brown thatch! No wonder he was forever curt, bowed, brusque!

It seemed to me that the next few weeks of my life were crowded, disordered; I no longer had a chance to think. Dirk was forever coming to see Jerry and me, was forever carrying us forth upon pleasurable. Mrs. Fenwick-Hall, who shared Geraldine's philosophy about the folly of cherishing animosities—who, indeed, was probably its author—came to see us, and insisted upon laying hold of my sister again. She was opening a new country place she had just bought on the Hudson with a great, flaming entertainment, and it developed that she wanted Jerry to sing. Jerry, with a queer little smile, acceded to the request, much to my amazement and disgust. Dennis was almost as much in the foreground of my existence as in the days before he had made me an offer of marriage, although he was planning a long season in Germany where he had a sister married to a count connected with the court. And constantly there seemed more work for me to do in the *Courier* office. Some of Peggy Woolson's rich friends had invited her on a Mediterranean cruise—Peggy was the one woman of my acquaintance who received from the cultivation of the wealthy more than she bestowed!—and I was given charge of her department during her absence.

Each afternoon I used to place the "layout" of the "Home Half Page" before Mr. Bromley for approval. Peggy had graduated beyond the need of that, but the office felt some distrust

of my untried ability. We never spoke of anything except my work, Mr. Bromley and I, but through all the brief interviews I had a scared, turbulent sense of intimacy with him, of a secret understanding with him. And when once, entering his quarters unannounced, I saw his leonine head bent upon his hands, and surprised the look of torture in his deep-set eyes, I had to fight against a sudden, blinding impulse to lay my hand upon his roughened hair, and to say: "Oh, my dear, my dear! I know. I am so sorry!" What I did say, however, was, "Oh, I—I beg your pardon—I thought the boy said——" And what he said was: "Come in, come in!"

Perhaps it was because of my excitement over my increased responsibilities that I failed to notice what was going on at home. Perhaps it was because the thing was concealed from me. But one night, when I had come in late from the office, I found Geraldine waiting up for me. Her eyes were large, and brilliant, and determined, and a high, unlovely color burned on her cheeks. She bade me sit down; she said she had something to tell me. I obeyed with a curious weakness.

"There is absolutely no good in mincing matters, Amy," she said harshly. "I don't believe in doing it. And—what I have to tell you can't be dressed up very prettily at best."

"Yes?" I answered.

"I am going to marry Dirk Kidder," she said.

We sat in the little room, perfectly quiet for a space. My first consciousness was of disloyalty, dishonor, heartlessness. But, after a pause, I heard myself asking meditatively: "Why not?"

Why not, indeed? Dirk had succeeded in his errand East. He had the money to work his mines; a fortune, a great fortune, was assured to him. He had the prospect of eminence in politics. And to him in his maturity, successful, energetic, emulous of all the symbols of success and energy, Geraldine appealed more strongly even than Amy had appealed to that drift-

ing, dreaming youth of his, before he had found himself. In those old days his idealism had craved a shrine, his unsuccess, his purposelessness, a mother; well, I had been, I know, the divinity of the shrine, the knees of benignant mother love. Now his manhood craved a mistress, his success, his assurance, a sign, an advertisement. He was in love with Jerry, of course, in love with the superb beauty of her, in love with the renown and *réclamé* of her golden voice! Why not, then?

And Geraldine? She loved him after her fashion, I suppose. He was virile and dominant. He offered her what she wanted more than she wanted anything else in the world—ease, power, brilliance. For hers had been only half the artist's gift. The voice of honey and of gold was hers, but not the fiery desire to give it to the world. With her—so had we all trained her!—her gift was to be a means of purchase for herself and for us of renown and luxury. Well, she had bought them in a more acceptable way!

So again I said, "Why not?" And when she came and knelt by my side and cried, I soothed her gently.

"Oh, A, A!" she besought me with sobs at the end of it all. "Tell me again that you don't love him! Tell me, tell me!"

I answered her, truthfully, that I did not. For I knew, clearly enough, that it had been but the pregnant seed of love I had destroyed for the sake of her career. I would not tell her that I believed in my heart it might have flowered into a lovelier blossom than any other in all the world, had it not been killed for her sake!

I still believe it. Illogically, persistently, I believe that there is nothing so beautiful as the love that grows out of the seed of beautiful, glamorous first love. I find no fault with life or with its exactions and demands. I do not envy Geraldine—she is the new, rich, Western congressman's wife, and their house in Washington is a show place—her husband or her house or her twin babies, her equipages, her fashion, or her leadership. She, curiously

enough, envies me my modest little success, although when I went over to see her last winter, she pretended to be very proud of "Pauline," and had the fact that she was entertaining the writer of an almost best-seller duly chronicled in all the papers, and gave me teas and dinners and receptions until I was dizzy, and even cajoled the president into quoting from the book!

"You were awfully wise, Amy, never to marry," she said to me seriously. "You have a better figure than mine now, though you're thirty-six to my thirty. And you have your successes, your renown—every one dying to meet you for yourself and not just for your husband's millions or his vote on some old thing or other! And you have such friendships—I'm inclined to believe they are more vital to men than their loves! Dirk is more solidly fond of you than he is of me, I honestly believe! And Dennis Sawtelle is as devoted to you since he married that English widow as he was before—and so is she! Women never seem to care for me! And as for that terrible bear of a friend of yours, that Bromley—By the way, Amy, I read in the paper a few months ago of the death of a Mrs. Upton Bromley. Was it—Oh, my dear! After all these hideous years! And you—never mind what I have been saying against marriage—you will, won't you? You will make him happy after that horror he has lived through? And yourself? Oh, you will have got all the best out of life! But you deserve it, you deserve it, my dear!"

But I know otherwise. I shall not have had the best of life, good as life has been to me. I know the aching tenderness I feel for that dear, and scarred heart against which mine is henceforth to beat is not like the happy love that might have flowered from the little idyl that was killed for Geraldine's sake. First love—one love—the great, sacred stream of life that flows unbroken from the shy, silver spring of youth—that I might have had, and that I lost!

But perhaps, as Geraldine says, no one has that except in dreams.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and vines frames the entire page.

ON TRADE-MARKS

By Edwin L. Sabin

THE West Pointer commandant of us college cadets walked from one building to another, and when he passed under the United States flag, he did a queer thing—he lifted his cap in quiet salute.

You know, at the military academy they are infected with a lot of cut-and-dried notions foreign to the daily life of plodding, matter-of-fact civilians; and we happy-go-lucky college chaps had rather expected some extraordinary actions from this quick, precise, autocratic young fellow, with his erect carriage, his slim waist, and his general air of go-ahead without waiting for somebody else to go ahead first.

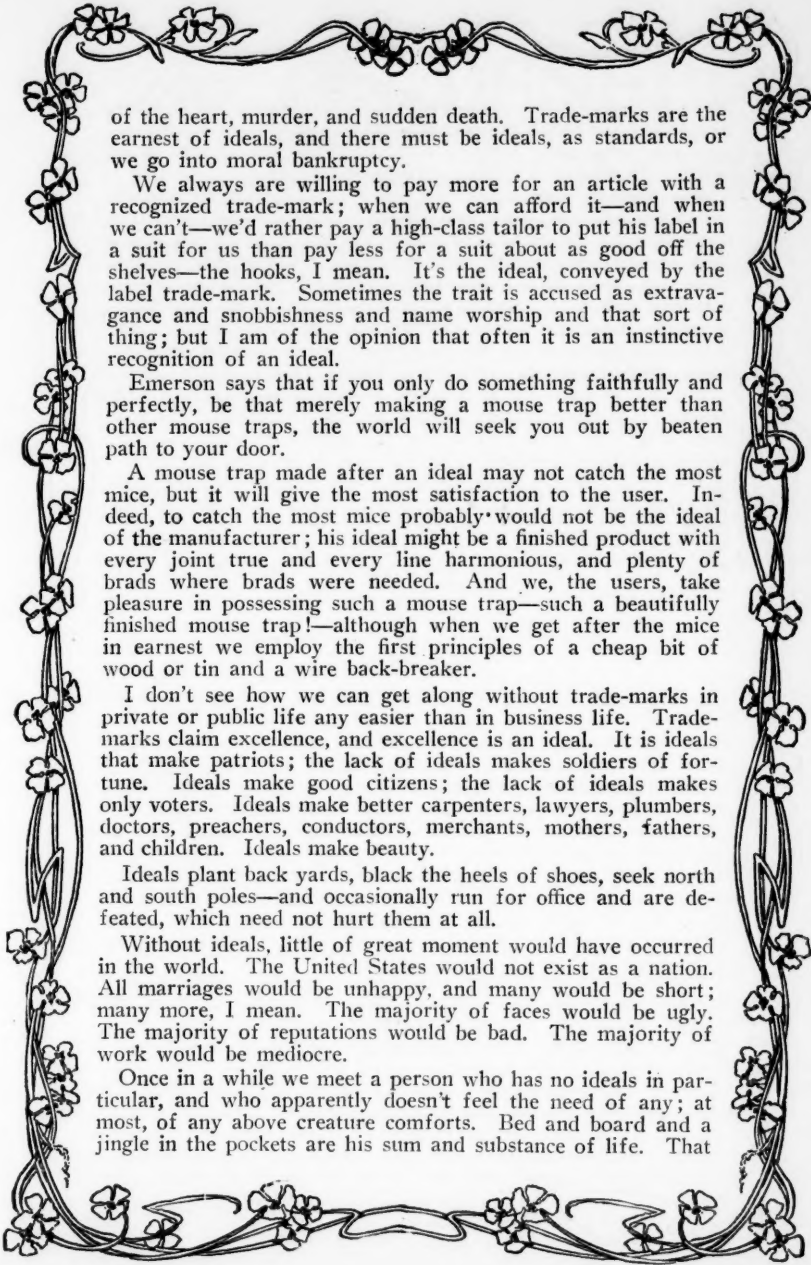
But to lift one's cap so solemnly simply because one passed the familiar United States flag seemed a bit of mummery on the side. Any and all of us would fight to uphold the flag when it needed upholding—that was duty; whereas this uncalled-for salute was a sort of a flourish thrown away.

So, to most of us, the lieutenant's performance appeared as a curiosity; yet to some of us it proved an object lesson, as he had intended. And the object lesson grew.

The spruce young officer, with his West Point rigidity, was not making a grand-stand play by saluting red-white-and-blue bunting; he was acknowledging a trade-mark. It was the trade-mark of his country; but in baring his head to his country, represented in that flag trade-mark, he was baring it not to a million square miles of land or to the millions of people living upon that land. He was baring it to an ideal, of which the flag and the word "America" are only reminders. Back of every trade-mark, and of every trade-mark the cause and reason, is an ideal.

Trade-marks play such a tremendous game in our daily life that if they were forbidden and wiped out by law, the result would be not only a hiatus, but a catastrophe. On the spur of the moment, any of us can name offhand a dozen utility articles that are known to us by their flag trade-mark. It is the letter on the college sweater. We buy on the token of that trade-mark. It represents an ideal. It is a guarantee. It guarantees quality, and, above all, the quality of purpose.

Now, if there were no trade-marks, where should we all be at? Not only would the advertising pages of the magazines be much less interesting, and we miss familiar pictures, but how would the buyer be emboldened to buy if the seller flew no flag? Why, the whole world of business exchange would be afflicted with St. Vitus' Dance, anæmia, palpitation



of the heart, murder, and sudden death. Trade-marks are the earnest of ideals, and there must be ideals, as standards, or we go into moral bankruptcy.

We always are willing to pay more for an article with a recognized trade-mark; when we can afford it—and when we can't—we'd rather pay a high-class tailor to put his label in a suit for us than pay less for a suit about as good off the shelves—the hooks, I mean. It's the ideal, conveyed by the label trade-mark. Sometimes the trait is accused as extravagance and snobbishness and name worship and that sort of thing; but I am of the opinion that often it is an instinctive recognition of an ideal.

Emerson says that if you only do something faithfully and perfectly, be that merely making a mouse trap better than other mouse traps, the world will seek you out by beaten path to your door.

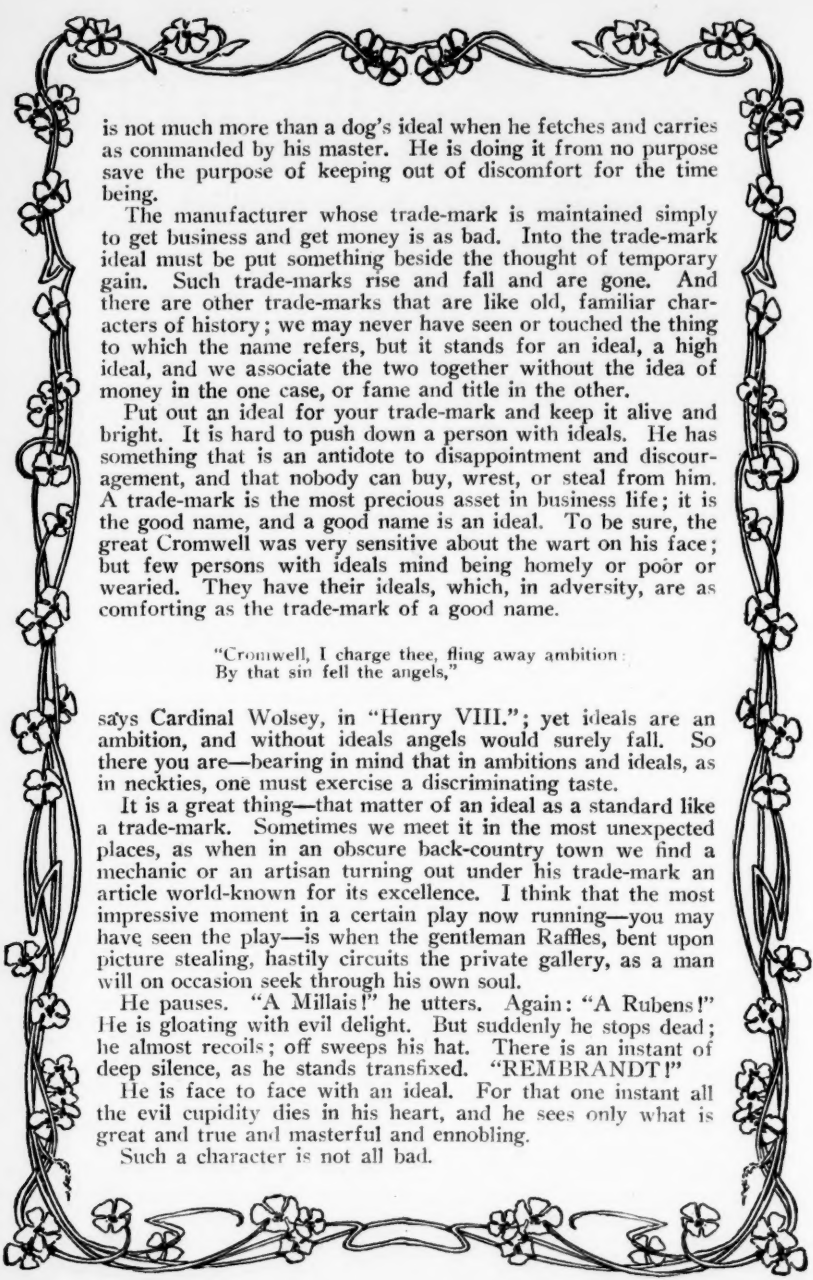
A mouse trap made after an ideal may not catch the most mice, but it will give the most satisfaction to the user. Indeed, to catch the most mice probably would not be the ideal of the manufacturer; his ideal might be a finished product with every joint true and every line harmonious, and plenty of brads where brads were needed. And we, the users, take pleasure in possessing such a mouse trap—such a beautifully finished mouse trap!—although when we get after the mice in earnest we employ the first principles of a cheap bit of wood or tin and a wire back-breaker.

I don't see how we can get along without trade-marks in private or public life any easier than in business life. Trade-marks claim excellence, and excellence is an ideal. It is ideals that make patriots; the lack of ideals makes soldiers of fortune. Ideals make good citizens; the lack of ideals makes only voters. Ideals make better carpenters, lawyers, plumbers, doctors, preachers, conductors, merchants, mothers, fathers, and children. Ideals make beauty.

Ideals plant back yards, black the heels of shoes, seek north and south poles—and occasionally run for office and are defeated, which need not hurt them at all.

Without ideals, little of great moment would have occurred in the world. The United States would not exist as a nation. All marriages would be unhappy, and many would be short; many more, I mean. The majority of faces would be ugly. The majority of reputations would be bad. The majority of work would be mediocre.

Once in a while we meet a person who has no ideals in particular, and who apparently doesn't feel the need of any; at most, of any above creature comforts. Bed and board and a jingle in the pockets are his sum and substance of life. That



is not much more than a dog's ideal when he fetches and carries as commanded by his master. He is doing it from no purpose save the purpose of keeping out of discomfort for the time being.

The manufacturer whose trade-mark is maintained simply to get business and get money is as bad. Into the trade-mark ideal must be put something beside the thought of temporary gain. Such trade-marks rise and fall and are gone. And there are other trade-marks that are like old, familiar characters of history; we may never have seen or touched the thing to which the name refers, but it stands for an ideal, a high ideal, and we associate the two together without the idea of money in the one case, or fame and title in the other.

Put out an ideal for your trade-mark and keep it alive and bright. It is hard to push down a person with ideals. He has something that is an antidote to disappointment and discouragement, and that nobody can buy, wrest, or steal from him. A trade-mark is the most precious asset in business life; it is the good name, and a good name is an ideal. To be sure, the great Cromwell was very sensitive about the wart on his face; but few persons with ideals mind being homely or poor or wearied. They have their ideals, which, in adversity, are as comforting as the trade-mark of a good name.

"Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition:
By that sin fell the angels,"

says Cardinal Wolsey, in "Henry VIII.;" yet ideals are an ambition, and without ideals angels would surely fall. So there you are—bearing in mind that in ambitions and ideals, as in neckties, one must exercise a discriminating taste.

It is a great thing—that matter of an ideal as a standard like a trade-mark. Sometimes we meet it in the most unexpected places, as when in an obscure back-country town we find a mechanic or an artisan turning out under his trade-mark an article world-known for its excellence. I think that the most impressive moment in a certain play now running—you may have seen the play—is when the gentleman Raffles, bent upon picture stealing, hastily circuits the private gallery, as a man will on occasion seek through his own soul.

He pauses. "A Millais!" he utters. Again: "A Rubens!" He is gloating with evil delight. But suddenly he stops dead; he almost recoils; off sweeps his hat. There is an instant of deep silence, as he stands transfixed. "REMBRANDT!"

He is face to face with an ideal. For that one instant all the evil cupidity dies in his heart, and he sees only what is great and true and masterful and ennobling.

Such a character is not all bad.



FINALLY the manager came. Mrs. Cochran recognized him instantly as the original of a newspaper picture pasted among other notables in Verdant's scrapbook. His head was bald and shiny, and his tortoise-shelled-rimmed glasses looked as if newly polished after a dip in soapsuds. Two glittering front teeth added to his peculiarly scoured and beaming countenance, though the smile that revealed them seemed to be a matter of habit rather than of geniality.

Mrs. Cochran arose from her seat by the door and addressed him with some trepidation. There was an evasive slant to his shoulders, and his manner conveyed the impression that to avoid being spoken to was the main business of his life.

"Is this Mr. Augustus Hatfield?"

He swung through the polished mahogany gate dividing intruders' alley from inner shrine, and closed it behind him.

"Have you an appointment with me, madam?"

"N-no, Mr. Hatfield. I wrote for one and got no answer, so I thought I'd try coming down in person."

"Your business?"

His glasses shimmered like summer lightning as a sunray from the window struck them.

"I wanted to ask if you wouldn't give my little girl a hearing before you go back to London. I am Mrs. Cochran, mother of Verdant Cochran, the child violinist."

"I am sorry, Mrs.—er—I did not quite catch the name?"

"Cochran," supplied Verdant's mother.

"Sorry, Mrs. Cochran, but I have never listed child artists, and do not care to branch out in that line."

"Verdant is no ordinary—" began Mrs. Cochran, but the manager cut her short.

"None of them are, to hear their fond mothers tell it. No disrespect intended, madam, but my past experiences with the parents of prodigies have been trying. That's why my secretary was instructed to refuse you an appointment."

"He didn't refuse it, or I wouldn't be here," said Mrs. Cochran, with dignity, "and I thought it was perhaps by mistake that my letter wasn't answered. We don't wish to force Verdant on anybody. It may take a little while longer, but she can win out with no one but her pa and me to help her if she has to."

Perceiving that Mrs. Cochran had no intention of holding him prisoner by insistence, the manager became more amiable.

"Of course, yours may be a very clever

er little girl—doubtless is—doubtless! When she has reached years of maturity, I may be very glad to place her among my other attractions.”

Mrs. Cochran rejected the polite commonplace.

“But you see, Mr. Hatfield, that what I’m interested in happens to be her progress right now. Good afternoon.”

She found her way back to the elevator.

“Glad I didn’t bring Verdant along with me as I thought of doin’!” she said to herself, as the drop down the long shaft began. “She shan’t experience any more heartburnin’s than she has to, as long as her mother lives to shield her. Snubbin’s don’t hurt me any to speak of, but they do a little sensitive plant like her. She just don’t know what to make of ’em.”

When she reached the door of their modest apartment, Professor Cochran was ushering out a music pupil.

“Well, little mother,” he said affectionately, drawing her inside, “have you been trying to turn the big world the other way on its axis only to find out it would rather keep on going in the same old direction?”

Mrs. Cochran’s brown eyes were a bit misty as she answered:

“How did you know I was blue, pa?”

“Because your smile wabbles instead of standing firm the way it usually does.”

Mrs. Cochran removed her new hat, donned with the idea that it might add to the pleasant impression she had hoped to make on the manager, and carefully inserted a hatpin into the only and original puncture intended for its use.

“To try to control fate,” she observed with unwonted pessimism, “is about like tryin’ to interfere with the habits of the earth, or sun, or stars. Yet I reckon the same force that keeps on drivin’ them around in their orbits is what makes us keep on endeavorin’ to push the obstructions out of the paths marked out for us. Ho, hum! Sometimes I wish life wasn’t quite such a puzzle.”

“Didn’t you get to see Mr. Hatfield?”

inquired Professor Cochran understandingly, “or was it that he didn’t talk to suit you?”

“He didn’t talk to suit me. I saw him all right, bu. I had to wait most of the afternoon to do it.”

“What did he say?”

“Oh, that he hadn’t any interest in child artists—that’s the long and short of it. What he said, together with the disappointment of Verdant’s missin’ that Aftermath Club Concert when they’d as good as promised her the engagement, has sort of upset me.”

“Now you want to put off those indigo glasses right away, Gertrude! If we do get a knockdown in one direction, the next thing you know we are sailing off on rosy clouds in another. Since you’ve been gone, I’ve enrolled two new piano pupils, and promising ones at that!”

“Did you, pa? I might have known somethin’ good would happen! The Lord always does manage to even things up for us, if I’d only stop to remember it. Two new pupils? Well, now, that’s fine! I’m lookin’ forward to the day you’ll be kept so busy givin’ lessons that you won’t have an hour to spare. You deserve it, and it’s comin’—mark my words!”

The lanky professor smiled down fondly at the plump little partner of his joys and sorrows.

“That’s the good booster talking again now! Your real mission in life is to boost, dearie. You don’t seem quite natural when you’re doing anything else.”

“You’re something of a booster yourself, pa,” and she snuggled her head for a moment against his comforting shoulder. Her voice had all its old cheerfulness when she straightened up again.

“Is that chocolate puddin’ I smell cookin’?”

“Now, now, mother, how can I keep an important state secret when your nose starts in to ferret it out like that? Verdant and Fern are getting dinner between them—that’s the extent of the bulletin I’m permitted to issue.”

Mrs. Cochran removed her gloves, carefully smoothing out the creases.

"Bless their hearts! They're more of a help and comfort to me every day they live! But isn't it sort of early for dinner?"

"They said something about wanting to have it over with in time for an early start to the concert."

"What concert?"

"Why, don't you remember? That benefit affair at Ashe Chapel that Miss Halsey has been getting up?"

"Oh, yes, of course! Dear me! I'd forgotten all about our buyin' tickets for that! Poor Mr. Stevens! To think of his playin' a church organ for twenty years, and not savin' a penny against a rainy day! Here he is in his old age obliged to have a benefit concert to keep him goin'!"

"Why, ma, why didn't you tell us you had come?"

Fern, bursting suddenly into the room, stood before them with a smudge of chocolate across her chin and streaks of flour on her apron. "I just thought I'd ask pa how long he supposed it would be before you got home."

"Well, you can tell Verdant I'm starvin' for dinner any time it's set on the table. It isn't every mother that can run away from home and have a special banquet ready and waitin' for her when she comes back. It's enough to spoil me!"

After the surprise dinner had been duly exclaimed over by both Mrs. Cochran and the professor, the broiled chops complimented, the chocolate pudding lauded to the skies, and slight accidents like burned biscuits tactfully ignored, the conversation turned to the subject of the evening's entertainment.

"Miss Sheldon will be sure to recite to-night, won't she, ma?" asked Verdant. "Miss Halsey phoned to ask about it, and seemed afraid she might disappoint her."

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Fern, "I shouldn't think Miss Halsey would worry about any one person's taking part when there's a list of artists a yard long anyway."

"But she's been getting regrets all

day," explained Verdant. "She said that nearly all those she had counted on had sent word that they can't be there."

"That's just what I've been expectin'!" commented Mrs. Cochran. "The announcement reads, 'Among those invited to appear,' not 'Among those who *will* appear,' and there's a big difference in the meaning of those two statements. Miss Halsey was foolish enough to go ahead and get out her printin' without waitin' to find out who could perform and who couldn't. She took it for granted that just askin' them was all that was necessary, and now she's findin' out the difference."

The professor laughed.

"Why, if folks in general didn't have too much sense to believe that any one could get all those grand-opera stars together for a little fifty-cent benefit affair, she'd find herself in a precarious tangle. There'd be a line of people reaching from Ashe Chapel clear around the block and back again, demanding their money's worth and more."

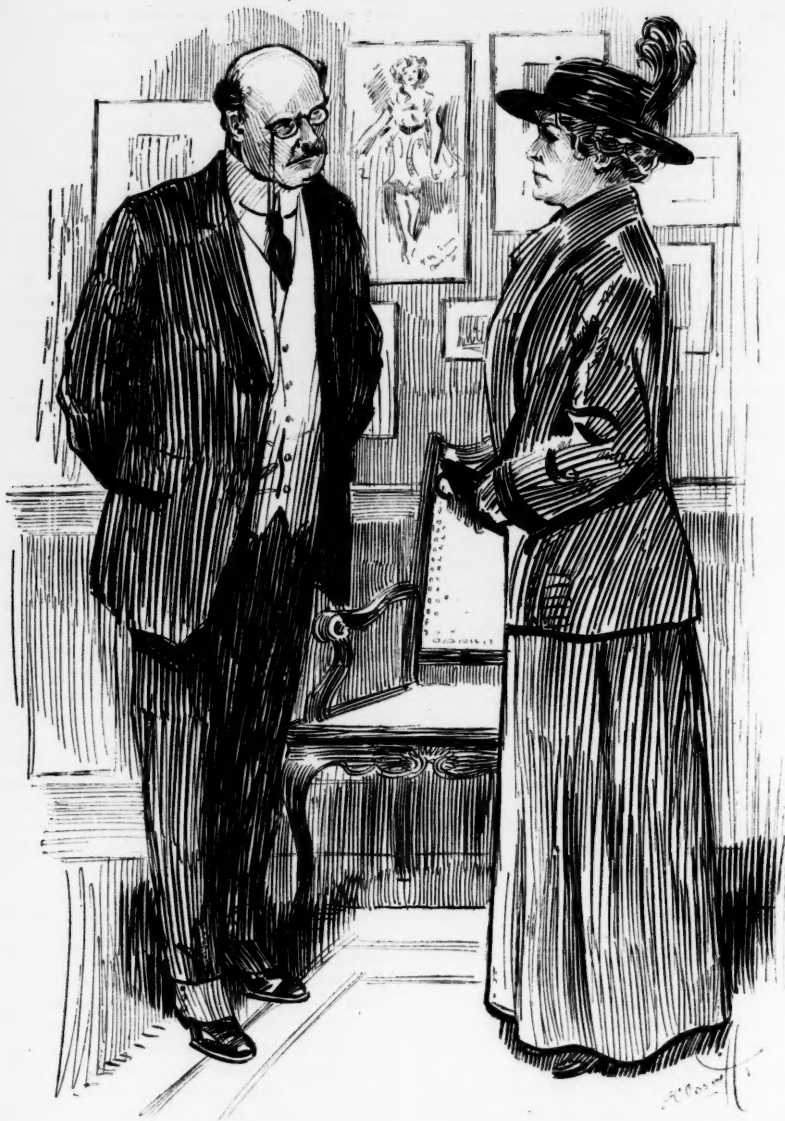
"Of course, Miss Halsey didn't mean to cheat the public," said Mrs. Cochran excusingly. "It's just that she ain't used to gettin' up entertainments and has been too independent, mebbe, about wantin' to engineer the whole thing herself."

"Now please hurry up and get dressed, Fernie," implored Verdant when they had finished doing the dishes. "You always put in so much time primping that you hardly ever get ready as soon as you think you will."

"We've got to be there at eight o'clock sharp if we don't want to miss hearin' Miss Sheldon," chimed in Mrs. Cochran, "for she opens the program on account of havin' to leave early to recite at another entertainment in Brooklyn."

Fern hung up the dishcloth, then paused to admire her reflection in a bright tin pan hanging above the kitchen sink.

"I don't see that I primp any more than you do, Verdant, only I have to put kinks in my hair with curl papers, and



"Verdant is no ordinary——" began Mrs. Cochran, but the manager cut her short.

you don't because yours is full of kinks already."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you young ones," Mrs. Cochran exclaimed from the depths of an adjoining room, where she was bending over a bureau drawer, "that Miss Sheldon is goin' to recite 'As the Moon Rose,' because it's been especially requested."

"Oh, isn't that fine!" enthused Verdant.

"Goodie! Goodie!" shrieked Fern, and she and Verdant danced up and down like joyous young hop-toads in a rain.

"Of course, she's just grand in it," went on Mrs. Cochran, "but if I had to make a choice, I'd rather hear her do 'Biddy Mulcahey at the Ball,' any day."

"Why, ma!" exclaimed Verdant, surprised. "But the other recitation is so much more high class!"

"I know it is," acknowledged Mrs. Cochran, coming to the door and smoothing down the new lace collar she had put on to freshen up her appearance, "but it's so dramatic that it gives me palpitation of the heart every time I hear it. I'm always afraid the girl on horseback can't ride fast enough with the pardon to save Hiram from bein' executed as a spy, and it upsets me."

"But, ma!" wondered Fern. "You surely know she always does get there when you've heard Miss Sheldon say she does so many times."

"That don't make the least bit of difference. Miss Sheldon just seems so strung up and excited about it herself when she's tellin' the story to the audience, and so afraid the girl can't save Hiram's life, no matter how hard she tries, that she gets me all strung up, too. Of course, the more she gets me strung up, the better I know she's doin' the recitation, but all the same I'd rather laugh over Biddy Mulcahey losin' her switch at the ball."

Fern leaned over to pull on her best buckled ties. They were fully a size too small. She hummed with elaborate carelessness to conceal the recurrent sufferings her vanity had wrought.

"Make Fern hurry, ma, won't you?" begged Verdant. "It lacks only five minutes to eight o'clock now."

"I'll be ready in just a second," announced Fern, skipping across the floor with lightsome, though painful, speed, "just as soon as I've fussed my bangs a little. I didn't do them up in curl papers, and they look all flattened out like dabs of molasses candy."

Miss Sheldon, slim, sinuous, and looking unusually blond and pretty in a pale-green gown, was already well along in her rendition of "As the Moon Rose," when her three admirers reached Ashe Chapel, and they slid unobtrusively into a rear seat. As usual, Verdant and Fern were held almost breathless until the climax of the exciting narrative was reached, and Mrs. Cochran gave symptoms of interest that amounted to distress. A couple of encore selections were demanded, and when the elocutionist finally bowed herself off, after a spirited rendition of "Biddy Mulcahey at the Ball," an appreciative buzz of conversation ensued.

Then occurred a painful hitch in the proceedings. For fully a quarter of an hour the audience stared at an empty stage, and the door through which Miss Sheldon had made her final exit remained mysteriously closed. Some small boys on the front seat began to pummel each other, to relieve the monotony of the long wait, and had to be quelled by their watchful elders. Then the crowd became expectant again, but to no purpose. The chapel clock seemed to tick louder and louder. An old man indulged in an asthmatic coughing spell, and a gray-haired janitor—who looked like a deacon off duty—opened an adjacent window to relieve him with fresh air. Some one started an impatient outburst of handclapping to summon the reluctant celebrities, but still there was no response.

"What's the matter, I wonder?" Verdant whispered to her mother. "Do you suppose some one's sick back there, or something like that?"

Mrs. Cochran shook her head apprehensively.

"I'm afraid there's no one there to be sick, and that that's what the trouble is. Wouldn't it be dreadful for poor Mr. Stevens if the entertainment couldn't go on?"

"Why would it be more dreadful for him than for any one else?" inquired Fern.

"Because if this is all the program she's got to give 'em, Miss Halsey will have to offer folks their money back, and I reckon most of 'em would take it, especially those who don't realize how bad Mr. Stevens' condition is and how much he needs every cent he can raise."

"Why doesn't Miss Halsey come out and make some kind of an explanation?" Verdant questioned. "Why, I never saw an audience kept waiting like this before!"

At that moment the deaconish-looking janitor tiptoed to the end of the bench occupied by the Cochrans, and, leaning forward, handed to Mrs. Cochran a visiting card with something scribbled on its back.

Fern's keen eyes read the message at a glance.

"Miss Halsey says for you to come through the basement back to the study, ma, for she's almost crazy."

"I don't see what there is I can do to help her," commented Mrs. Cochran, "but of course I'm willin' to talk things over, if that'll do her any good."

When she reached the pastor's study—the room that opened onto the stage—she found little Miss Halsey walking the floor, the tears raining down her cheeks. There was not another person in sight.

"Oh, Mrs. Cochran," she sobbed, her gayly fashionable hat and gown forming a sharp contrast to her dejected features. "Isn't it terrible? After all the trouble I went to, not a soul here to continue the program! Did you ever hear of any one placed in such a predicament as I am?" She pressed a damp wad of handkerchief against her mouth to keep her grief subdued to well-bred proportions—Miss Halsey was nothing if not well bred—and

gazed at Mrs. Cochran, as if expectant of some sort of consolation.

"Who's that man walking up and down the hall out there?" inquired Mrs. Cochran practically. "He's in evenin' clothes. Isn't he here to take part?"

"He's only Herr Svangel's accompanist. Oh, I thought he might help me out, and just begged him to do a piano solo to fill in until some one else arrived, but he says he's not a soloist, and positively refused! And that, too, when I heard him promise Herr Svangel he would do anything in his power to aid me!"

"Why, but where is Herr Svangel himself?"

"That's the worst part of it! Herr Svangel has phoned us that on his way here he was in an automobile accident and sprained his valuable wrist. He can't play for me or any one else for a week. It's just in keeping with the way everything else has been going! The useless accompanist arrives safely, carrying Herr Svangel's music and violin, but Herr Svangel himself has to go and get injured."

"But 'tain't likely he did it on purpose," observed Mrs. Cochran dryly. "And, anyhow, out of all those you asked to take part, there surely ought to be enough get here to piece out an hour's entertainment!"

"No, Mrs. Cochran, the only one I can positively count on is Madam Rosalda, who is a personal friend of mine, and I shan't be certain of even her until I see her come in. And there's that audience out there waiting to be entertained in the meantime!"

There was an unspoken appeal in her voice that Mrs. Cochran could not fathom.

"Well, Miss Halsey, is there anything I can do toward hurryin' Madam Rosalda's arrival? Is that what you wanted to see me about?"

"No, Mrs. Cochran; I wanted to beg you to allow Verdant to go right on now and play for me. Miss Sheldon told me she saw you all sitting together out there while she was reciting, and that's what put the idea in my head. I'd have asked Verdant in the first place," she

added apologetically, "only I'd made up my mind that it would be nice to advertise only musicians with a European reputation."

"No apologies are necessary," Mrs. Cochran replied, an amused twinkle in her eye, "for if you thought you was slightin' Verdant by not invitin' her to take part, neither she nor any of the rest of us suspicioned it. But it's impossible for the child to play now, because she hasn't got her violin with her, and by the time she went all the way home and back for it, it would be too late."

"But I've provided for that," cried Miss Halsey eagerly. "Herr Svangel's accompanist said if I could secure Verdant, he'd play for her and take the full responsibility of letting her use Herr Svangel's violin. Herr Svangel phoned him to help me out all he could, you know. Listen! They're clapping again! I'll be disgraced if some one doesn't step out onto that platform in the next few minutes! Oh, Mrs. Cochran, I'll willingly pay the child out of my own pocket—"

"No!" The mother of the little violinist stiffened visibly. "Verdant ain't wantin' money for helpin' out Mr. Stevens—if her playin's worth anythin' extry to you, let him get the benefit of it. Anyhow, I can't promise until I go see if she's willin' to do it. Of course, not havin' her own Cremona to play on, and not bein' dressed for the concert stage, I don't know what she'll say. But if it's all right, I'll be back here with her in no time."

Verdant was a much flustered little girl when she found herself standing before the audience in a plain dark dress, and with a somewhat unfamiliar piece of music on the rack before her—a piece selected from the music roll of the absent violinist. Mrs. Cochran, listening from the study, could detect signs of nervousness in the opening bars, but, as Verdant had never yet failed to rise to an emergency, felt certain she would soon get full control of herself.

While the child was still playing, pretty, petite Madam Rosalda flashed

into the study in a gold-colored Parisian gown and wrap. She was followed by a man whose bald head reflected the light like a mirror as he removed his hat. Mrs. Cochran started as she caught sight of him, but to her relief the manager did not seem to recognize her when Miss Halsey performed the ceremony of introduction. She had put the afternoon's disagreeable interview out of her mind, and did not care to have any reference made to it.

"Oh, dear Helene," began Miss Halsey imploringly, almost before the prima donna had time to seat herself, "do sing the very longest aria in your repertoire! An electionist, a violinist, and you are all I have to depend on for this entire entertainment. Every one else has disappointed me. If you had done likewise, I should have died!" She turned to the smiling manager. "Oh, Mr. Hatfield! It is so kind of you to permit Madam Rosalda to sing at my modest little concert!"

"Not at all, Miss Halsey!" The manager's tone was suavity itself. Miss Halsey was a rich society girl and therefore a potential patroness of the morning musicales he was soon to inaugurate. "I'm taking both Madam Rosalda and Herr Svangel to the Aftermath Concert later, and was really quite pleased to have them drop off here and warm up a bit before it begins. By the way, that's a wonderful instrument of Herr Svangel's! I'd know it anywhere." He started for the door separating the study from the stage, and, reaching it, paused, listening attentively.

"Dear me!" murmured Miss Halsey in dismay. "Perhaps he won't like it when he finds out some one else is using the precious instrument of his star violinist. I never thought of that!" And she proceeded to inform Madam Rosalda of Herr Svangel's accident and the necessity for a substitute player.

Mrs. Cochran's feelings were very different as she noticed Mr. Hatfield's absorption in the performance on the other side of the door. An odd little smile curved the corners of her generous mouth. All unknowingly, the Eng-

lish manager and critic was doing just what he had emphatically refused to do only a few hours before—giving little Verdant Cochran a hearing as she played the violin.

"But who, then, is taking Herr Svangel's place?" Madam Helene Rosalda inquired. She was an American soprano who—bowing to the dictum of managerial opinion—had discarded the plain name of Nellie Smith somewhere abroad and brought back in its place her present ornamental one.

"It's my little girl—Verdant Cochran," replied the mother, as Miss Halsey waited the question toward her with a daintily gloved hand. "Perhaps you've heard of her. She has just as fine an instrument as that at home, but there wasn't time to go for it, so she's using Herr Svangel's instead."

Madam Rosalda's frank American face expressed her surprise.

"Do you mean to tell me that it's just a little girl playing that difficult thing in such a masterly way?"

Miss Halsey's delicate eyebrows rose in astonishment. She had always felt a bit uncertain as to Verdant Cochran's artistic ability, seeing that she was just a home product, and the Cochrans were such unpretentious people anyhow, but if Madam Rosalda, educated abroad, and with a European reputation, thought so well of her, surely—

A clamorous burst of applause put an end to her reflections. The manager flung open the door to admit Herr Svangel, as he thought, and instead there came tripping toward him a bright-faced little girl in a simple brown dress, her long curls falling forward over her shoulders. She was carrying a violin, and Herr Svangel's accompanist followed close on her heels. She passed the astounded Mr. Hatfield without even so much as a glance in his direction, oblivious to everything but the verdict in her mother's eyes.

"You'll take an encore, dear, to lengthen out the program, won't you?" implored Miss Halsey.

"But maybe there's nothin' else here she can play," demurred Mrs. Cochran.

"Oh, yes, there is, mamma, for I saw

it when I picked out the other. This minuet—see? I know it so well I could do it with my eyes closed!"

"That's mighty lucky, Miss Halsey, seein' that she didn't bring any music of her own."

Verdant's nervousness by this time had entirely disappeared, and she played the encore number with more than her usual brilliance and authority, but Mrs. Cochran felt wounded and heartsore as she listened. Mr. Hatfield, on learning of Herr Svangel's accident and non-appearance, had slammed an extinguishing hat over his glowing bald spot, and, muttering impatiently under his breath, had rushed from the room, having expressed not the slightest admiration for Verdant's achievement.

"I'm glad the child didn't notice him enough to recognize who he was," said Mrs. Cochran to herself. "She shan't ever know he heard her and ignored it all like that. It would just about break her little heart!"

When Verdant, flushed and triumphant, emerged from the stage, Mrs. Cochran helped her into her coat with affectionate care.

"Reckon Fern must be gettin' sort of lonesome settin' out in the audience all by herself. We'll go back to her right away, and hear Madam Rosalda's solo from there."

Miss Halsey came up, beaming and vivacious, and thanked the little violinist for her services.

"Everybody will surely be satisfied now," she said, "even if the program is so short, for everything has been first class. Of course, I never dreamed how unreliable musicians in general are, or I wouldn't have tried to get up a benefit entertainment, and I'll never do it again. I supposed they'd all be glad to do something for a worthy charity like Mr. Stevens."

Mrs. Cochran's sense of justice drove her into making a retort, though she did it kindly.

"I reckon, Miss Halsey, that's what every one thinks that's gettin' up charity concerts. They don't realize that if the poor artists tried to do all the free work they're asked to, they wouldn't



"Oh," gasped Verdaunt, "I'd just love to play anywhere you wish me to, but I haven't got on a concert dress!"

have any time left in which to make a livin'. The trouble is, you see, that there are too many Mr. Stevenses in the world needin' help. You'd soon find that out if you were in the entertainment business yourself."

"I beg your pardon, but aren't you the lady who called at my office this afternoon?"

Mr. Hatfield was close to Mrs. Cochran's elbow as he spoke, though she had not seen him reënter the room.

"I am," replied Verdant's mother inquiringly, wondering why he should care to ask the question.

"Then let me tell you, madam, that I went out in front on purpose to watch your little girl, as well as to listen to her. She is not to be classed as a child artist at all, but as a young genius whose future is already assured. I'll gladly introduce her abroad any time you care to bring her over."

"I thought mebbe you'd like her if you heard her once," Mrs. Cochran managed to say, though the sudden glad beating of her heart almost rendered her speechless. Verdant, sweet and shy, clung to her arm, blushing happily at the manager's praises.

"How about doing a concert for me to-night?" he asked abruptly. "Herr Svangel has played a bad trick on himself and me, but you can help me out by taking his place at the Aftermath Concert. How does that strike you, young lady?"

"Oh," gasped Verdant, "I'd just love to play anywhere you wish me to, but I haven't got on a concert dress! Oh, I just couldn't play at the Aftermath Club looking like this, could I, mamma?"

The manager consulted his watch.

"The Aftermath Concerts never begin before ten-thirty. How far do you live from here?"

"Why, not so very far! Mamma and sister and I walked over."

"She will be ready in half an hour from now, if that will do," Mrs. Cochran informed him.

"Good! Then let me have your address, Mrs. Cochran, and I'll send round a taxi in plenty of time."

Fern, plucked from the rear seat by the electric announcement of Verdant's sudden engagement, fairly raced along the pavement toward home, keeping ahead of her mother and sister all the way, and it was she who applied the latchkey, admitting them.

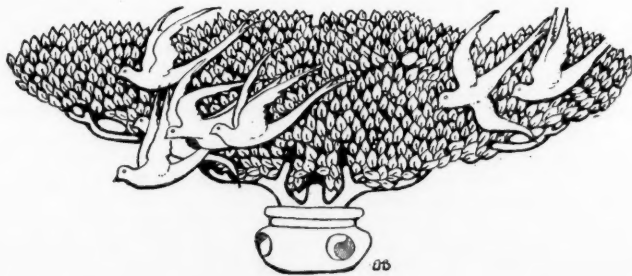
"I wish the professor was here, too," said Mrs. Cochran. "Seems like such excitin' news oughtn't to have to wait to be told."

When, half an hour later, a loud ringing of the bell proclaimed the arrival of the taxi, Mrs. Cochran gave vent to a sudden hysterical sob, causing Verdant to look up at her in surprise.

"Why, mamma, what's the matter? You aren't sorry I'm going to play for the Aftermath Club, are you? Why, the tears are spilling over on your cheeks!"

Mrs. Cochran smiled tremulously; then, to relieve her feelings, seized a hairbrush and gave Verdant's curls a superfluous going-over.

"No, child, of course I'm not sorry. I was just thinkin' how things seem all the brighter sometimes for loomin' so black in the first place, that's all. Now, run and put on your wrap! Fern, when your father gets home from that evenin' class in harmony—and he'd ought to be here pretty soon now—you can give him the biggest surprise he's had in a year. Tell him I've gone with Verdant to the Aftermath Club, and that she's playin' there to-night under the direction of Mr. Augustus Hatfield, of London!"



Madame Demonnet's Jewels

By Virginia Middleton

Author of "Cotrelly's First Capture," "The Fall of the House of Von Glehn," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. VAN BUREN

AS far as the records of the service go, Monty Redmond's career as a customs official was blameless, if not brilliant, up to the very hour of his established downfall. But records are, after all, deceptive matters, and Monty's moral degeneration had certainly begun long before the February night when, in the language of certain admiring and jealous associates, he "pulled a big thing." It had even begun, probably, before he met Miss Lorraine Lee. Doubtless it was brewing generations back, with ill-educated, self-indulgent ancestors; or surely in his childhood, passed in a struggling American circle where comfort and the commoner material pleasures of life were set up as the objects for which all the community strove. However, this is not a study of prenatal, or of environal influences upon character, but the story of Monty Redmond's dramatic exit from the customs service of the port of New York; and it is not necessary to go into the psychology of the case at all exhaustively.

In certain respects Monty outtopped his fellows when he came upon the force. He was an unusually handsome young man, in the opinion of those who admire an eye at once bright and languishing, lips rather overblown, though not ill cut, a dimpled, cleft chin, the rich color of the athlete, white, even teeth, crisply waving, dark hair, and a tall, well-knit body. To any one with a preference for strength, for thoughtfulness, for wisdom, humor, and a better variety of kindliness than that due to a good digestion, upon the masculine

countenance, Monty would have been a disappointment.

He himself was rather prejudiced in favor of his own style of beauty, and he was able to tell himself with a certain degree of truth that it was popular also among the ladies of his acquaintance. Monty had a weakness for the fair sex which he purposed some day—say, when he was about forty—to outgrow sufficiently to enable him to settle down with a nice-looking, healthy girl with some money of her own, and take to the raising of good stock on a Westchester farm. That was the best of his ambitions, and he put it always at a period rather remote from the present.

Meantime, his private taste ran rather in the line of easy conquests over the easily conquered fair, of a showy wardrobe, of occasional afternoons at the race tracks, of afternoons less occasional at the ball games, of little Sunday jaunts on excursion steamers up the Sound. But these were purely private aspirations; in public, he was a sufficiently intelligent young inspector attached to the surveyor's staff, not too strenuous in his desire for work, but not quite a shirk; not likely to involve the department in embarrassment by his overzealous discharge of his duties, but, apparently, alert enough.

Nevertheless, in spite of his untarnished record, it is probable that his palm had been crossed with silver before the day when Miss Lorraine Lee first cast her fine eyes upon him, and decided to induce him to pass her



"You mustn't look at those—those aren't for young gentlemen to see. All inspectors of ladies' baggage," she pouted, "ought to be old, old men with long, gray whiskers."

trunks, full of dutiable finery. Miss Lee was a swift and an accurate judge of men; one might say that it was her chief stock in trade to be so. She had been wondering, as she came up the harbor, just what rôle she should play when the inspector assigned to her should discover the discrepancy between her declaration, as filed with the ship's purser, and the contents of her trunks. The mere fact that the silks and velvets, the chiffons and feathers and furs, that those receptacles contained, represented no monetary outlay on Miss Lee's own part, did not present to her mind an adequate reason why she should now pay about a third of their value in duties.

But Miss Lee had traveled before; she felt that on the spur of the moment she could adopt the right rôle; she was, off the stage, and before a not too critical audience, an excellent actress. When she saw Monty Redmond assigned to her, she felt a swift release of the tenseness of muscle that accompanied concentration of thought in her. She allowed her bright, meaningful eyes to rest a full minute on his; then she smiled.

Monty felt his pulses quicken. Eyes and smile were of a friendliness and an import unmistakable. He had not numbered upon his list of conquests one like this. He could have blushed to think now of their humility, of the low standard that had satisfied him—the waitresses in the cheap restaurants where he ate his meals sometimes, the nurse girls whom he ogled in the park that he crossed on his way downtown. For here was what he called, with intense feeling, a "queen," exchanging with him glances that set the blood beating tumultuously in his veins. And yet there was that about Miss Lorraine Lee which made him feel that, for all her elegance, all her queenliness, all her superiority to the former lowly victims of his arrowed glance, she was not of the class of the inaccessible. Indeed, in spite of amorousness and vanity, Monty was not a complete fool; and he knew just what Miss Lee represented in the social order.

"You'll do the best you can for me, won't you?" she asked, standing so close to him that the odor of sandalwood—or was it ambergris?—or heliotrope?—was in his nostrils.

"We do our best for everybody," he told her, with officially adamantine manner.

She cast a roguish look into his dark eyes from her blue ones. "Like fun you do!" she glibed. Then she gave a scream—a tiny, little scream, meant for his ears alone—and she laid a detaining finger on his arm. Monty felt the touch through all his susceptible frame. "No, no!" she cried. "You mustn't look at those—those aren't for young gentlemen to see." And she managed to give him a glimpse of foamy, lacy, beribboned lingerie. "All inspectors of ladies' baggage," she pouted, "ought to be old, old men with long, gray whiskers."

"Do you think they would be so much better?" Monty found himself speaking hoarsely. Her hand had caught his in her effort to stay his onslaught upon the feminine mysteries of her trunk.

"Say," said Miss Lee, smiling persuasively, and pressing his fingers before withdrawing hers. "Why don't you chalk these trunks—and come up to see me this evening? Here's my card."

She fished inside her gold-meshed bag and brought out a card. Monty gave a swift look around the pier. Then his fingers closed over her slender ones. He slipped the folded card into his pocket. He went on with the rumpling of her luggage. He could no longer see it. The veins in his temples were pounding, and he wanted, as he had never wanted anything yet, to see Miss Lorraine Lee that evening.

"Oh, well!" he said. "Nothing but folderols and fluff, I guess."

Then he chalked the trunks as inspected and passed, gave the young woman a burning glance, achieved a touch of her fingers as he locked the trunks for her, helped her find an expressman and a cab, and finally succeeded in snatching a minute to look at the folded card. It contained a fifty-

dollar note, and the veins in Monty's forehead swelled again, this time with sudden anger. That was not the form in which he had designed to be paid for his easy-going blindness; he had intended an adventure, a brilliant, glowing adventure. He looked at the card—at least that was no fraud, as for a second he had feared that it might be. It bore her name:

MISS LORRAINE LEE,

The Catherine de Medici.

Broadway and — Street.

Mr. Redmond was able to escape from his official duties and his social engagements that night, and he made his way to the Catherine de Medici, the most ornate and one of the least stringent of the gorgeous apartment hotels of upper Broadway, purposing to fling the insulting bank note at Miss Lee's feet, and fearful lest she should not be visible to him. But she was—and he did it, and he did it with an air that became his stature very well. Miss Lee admired the air; she was not impervious to theatrical sentiment herself.

"Oh, well!" she said, twisting the money around her finger, and looking at Monty with genuine admiration in her glance. "If you don't need it, I do! But, say, I hope you ain't such an angel child as to do this sort of thing often. You can't afford it—the cost of livin' is too high, an' gettin' higher every minute!"

Monty forbore, with considerable effort, to boast about what he made. He clutched at his last, expiring remnant of prudence, and told himself that, after all, she might be a mere decoy planted to lure a handsome young inspector to his ruin. But before the evening was over, there was very little concerning Mr. Redmond's principles and aims, his means, and his amusements, that Miss Lee did not know. She knew, for example, what the department, in later times, could not be sure of—whether he had always been above eking out his modest salary by "making a little on the side." If he had been above it hitherto, he was so no longer, after his evening with Miss Lee. For

he perceived that he would need a great deal more money than that supplied by his salary to keep in the class of her "gentleman friends." And the one thing on earth that seemed to him completely worth while was to outshine them all, to outdistance them, to supplant them.

Now these things happened in the days that are already called "the old," though the difference in age between them and the present is less than the difference in discipline, in morale. The twentieth century was somewhat younger than it is now, to be sure; but the customs administration was a good deal easier going, and the dishonest alliance between certain inspectors and certain importers had not been uncovered and, after making considerable stench in men's nostrils, destroyed, as has happened since. So that Monty Redmond, finding himself in need of money made "on the side"—if, indeed, he had never before found himself in that straitened condition—found also the means of making it.

And Miss Lee, in a sudden access of the single-heartedness that a new affection may bring, even to a lady of somewhat promiscuous tastes, abandoned for a time her other masculine friends, and gave Monty his heart's ambition of supplanting them all. She also took him, malleable, pleasure-seeking weakling that he was, and she lent him brains for his dishonesty.

So, for the long—almost the eternal—period of two years, they sailed a smooth, though surreptitious sea, with love at the helm and pleasure at the prow—or words to that effect. And Miss Lee did some very clever smuggling for a syndicate of fashionable dressmakers, and felt, when she received her reward for her labors, all the virtuous pride of a woman who has cut loose from evil living for the sake of a purifying love. She had become, for Monty's sake, a working girl!

It was in the December of the second year of this idyl that the evildoers in the customs department began to be disturbed by hints of trouble ahead. There was a new head, with a reputa-

tion for a businesslike ability to cope with dishonesty; there were new subordinates in all the appointive offices. There were rumors of spies, of detectives, of informers, of cowards who wanted to purchase immunity by giving up their fellows. Altogether the days were disquieting to the little group in the customs service with crime upon their conscience, but very joyful to the larger one with clean hands to show. And the mere rumor that there was trouble brewing was enough to make the evildoers walk straight for the time being.

It happened to be early in this December that there arrived in New York a French gentleman and his wife, Monsieur Alphonse Demonnet and Madame Demonnet. They were persons of wealth, middle-aged, polite, accomplished. For instance, they could speak English very well. Their papers showed them to be residents of one of the great, grape-growing departments of France, and declared Monsieur Demonnet to be owner of vineyards and manufacturer of fine wines. They were coming to the United States for a six months' tour. On board the vessel they had talked, with pleased anticipation, of the visits they were to make, of the invitations they had received from Monsieur Demonnet's importers in the chief cities of the country. They were to go very early, so they said, to the Western coast; they had a particular and very natural interest in the vineyard district of the United States.

They were an agreeable couple, and all their fellow passengers liked them. Their declarations were made out with entire intelligence, although this was their first visit to these shores. Their own possessions were not dutiable, for they were alien visitors. They had brought over many trinkets for gifts, and they declared these with perfect frankness, and paid such small duties as were levied on them. Their personal effects were suitable to the wealth and station they enjoyed in their own land, and Madame Demonnet was the possessor of many fine jewels.

Monty, to whom had been assigned

the examination of their effects, noted with an eye more keen for such things than he had had in the days before he had fallen under the educative influence of Lorraine Lee, that there were, among several pairs of bracelets, two of great value—one pair of diamonds and pigeon-blood rubies, one pair of emeralds and diamonds. There were black pearls, set as earrings. There was a tiara of diamonds set in graduated sprays, the topmost diamond of the center spray being a rarely magnificent stone, not less than five carats in weight. There were some rings of great magnificence, and two or three costly brooches of different precious stones, all mounted in company with diamonds. There was a beautiful string of pearls.

Monty reflected upon the hardship of his lot. Here was he, in dire need of money, for the cautiousness necessitated by the new régime had reduced him horribly; and here was this woman entitled to bring in, free of duty, a wonderful collection of gems. If only they had been dutiable, and he had dared, in these timorous times, to let her escape with a payment to him of a third, a half—oh, a tenth—of what the duty would be, how comfortable he would be again, how cheerily he would stroll again on the sunny side of Easy Street! But the lady's jewels were entitled to free entry, she being an alien, and not bringing them in for sale. There was no possibility of a holdup, agreeable to her and to him and inimical only to the government. And he would be obliged to manage as best he could! It was, clearly and indisputably, an unjust world.

When he described the gems, and commented upon the inequalities of the world to Miss Lee at their next meeting, she sighed. She had the customary feminine passion for jewels. She loved their color, their brilliant glinting, the shots of light they emitted, their mystery.

"I'd like to see them," she said. "Where did they go, these Demonnets?"

"They went to the Richelieu-Bleeck-



*He caught the scintillations of green and water-pure gems reflected in the
is the most beautiful thing I*



*looking-glass. And he heard the pretty, ash-blond woman say with a sigh: "It
ever saw. I am mad for it."*

er," replied Monty gloomily, naming an old-fashioned hotel in the Washington Square district, which time had not shorn of all its ancient prestige, and which was still a favorite resort of French tourists familiar with the past history of the city, as far as hostelryes were concerned.

"Let's go down there to dinner some night," said Lorraine wistfully. "She might wear some of them in the dining room."

"All right," agreed Monty, who was doubly willing to humor her, since his tale of the French lady's jewels had not had the dreaded effect of making Miss Lee dissatisfied with her own less brilliant adornments.

The table d'hôte dinner of the Richelieu-Bleecker enjoyed considerable renown. It was, speaking in gustatory terms, a remarkably good dinner for the modest price of a dollar and a quarter; the courses were numerous, the cooking delicious as only good French cooking knows how to be. The old-fashioned dining rooms, papered in an old-fashioned red paper, set off with many scrolls and curlicues; the high white-and-gilt cornices and window pilasters; the mirrors that paneled the walls continuously to the height of a man's shoulders; the French windows opening upon narrow, old-fashioned, iron-railed balconies; the little white-and-gilt gallery, only a few feet above the floor, where the Hungarian musicians sat and discoursed rather good music during the dinner—all these features, at once quaint and gay, combined with the excellence of the cuisine and the pleasant cordiality of the service, to make the evening meal a popular one. The rooms were so divided, or connected, by wide arches that diners arriving early enough to command their table could obtain a view of the whole dining suite.

Monty, at the thoughtfully made suggestion of Miss Lee, telephoned the Richelieu-Bleecker before they set out. Was it to-night, he asked, coached by her, that Monsieur and Madame Demonnet were giving a dinner? He himself had thought the question a silly

one—why would it not be enough to ask if the Demonnets were still there; but the more intricate mind of Miss Lee perceived an object in the form in which she cast the question. And when, cordially, politely, the reply was made to the effect that the Demonnets were giving a small party of six covers that evening, Monty admitted that his innamorata had done well.

"You've forgotten the hour?" she tutored him. And Monty confided this fact to the obliging person at the other end of the wire.

"Seven," he told Lorraine, as he hung up the receiver.

"Well, we'll just have to trust to luck that it isn't to be in one of the private dining rooms," said the girl. "Gee, but I hope it will be in a public one, and that I can see the glass beads!"

Fortune favored the inspector and Miss Lee. The table that they selected was an excellent one, commanding not only the interior view that they desired, but also the sight of the street—lower Fifth Avenue, bright with arc lights shining violet through a thin mist of falling snow. A big, round table had been drawn to the corner back of them, evidently that those seated at it might command the same pleasing view; it was reserved, with a big card propped against a carafe to announce, and two or three chairs tipped against it to emphasize, the fact. And it was to this table, by and by, that Monsieur and Madame Demonnet ushered four guests, two pretty women and two men. Monty, signifying to Lorraine their great luck, proceeded to order dinner; up to this time they had been dallying with *apéritifs* and *hors d'œuvres*, in order to kill time.

"My, she's a stunning-looking dame! You didn't tell me that!" commented Miss Lee, her blue eyes fixed upon the commanding figure of the hostess, tall, stately, with her iron-gray hair rolled in a pompadour more imposing than most American pompadours, and her full throat, bare above her demicolleté black lace frock, gleaming with jewels. As she moved her head

sidewise, Lorraine caught the gleam of a jeweled comb in the back of her hair.

"I ain't given to thinkin' much about the looks of old hens," replied Mr. Redmond, with what was intended as a delicate compliment to the blooming youth of the fair one opposite him. But she sighed.

"Gee!" she said. "Do you know what I'll look like when I come to her time of day? No, I bet you don't! It's the dark ones that wear well; and the settled ones," she added, with another sigh. "I can tell you one thing, Monty Redmond—it's the sheltered life that gives you the best of it after forty. Still, a girl don't need to come to forty, if she don't want to."

Occasionally Miss Lee said disturbing little things like this—generally, to be quite truthful, when she had partaken injudiciously of the juice of the grape, or what went by that name. But it disturbed Monty to hear such melancholy sentiments from her lips at so early an hour in the evening.

"Ah, you know you're a queen!" he told her reassuringly.

"I'm glad you think so, Monty," replied the queen, still wistfully. "But I'd chuck it all in a minute for about fifty thousand cash. And then——"

"What would you do?" Monty demanded fiercely and jealously.

"Have a little place in the country," romantic Miss Lee, "and sell eggs."

It was the first time that Mr. Redmond had guessed that her ultimate dream paralleled his. He looked at her with a new light dawning in his eyes. He leaned toward her. Then he remembered the discrepancy between his fortune and fifty thousand dollars, and he wilted against the back of his chair again.

But Lorraine was suddenly animated by a new spirit. With eyes alight, with cheeks flushed, she was leaning forward until her bosom almost touched the table. She pushed her water goblet and her wineglass impatiently aside. She was looking eagerly at the table of the Demonnets behind Monty.

"Monty!" She spoke so low it was

almost a whisper. "Watch in the mirror opposite. Listen with all your ears."

Monty, obeying instructions, watched in the mirror opposite. He saw Madame Demonnet unclasp a bracelet and pass it across the table to the pretty, ash-blond woman on her husband's right. He caught the scintillations of green and water-pure gems reflected in the looking-glass. And he heard the pretty, ash-blond woman say with a sigh:

"It is the most beautiful thing I ever saw. I am mad for it. But—it's no use, dear madame. I might as well cry for the Kohinoor this winter. We're so abjectly poor, aren't we, Ed?"

Ed, round-faced, short-necked, sunk in the collar of his dress shirt, raised his dull eyes, nodded, and said portentously: "None of us know where we're at—panic brewing."

"May I see it, Mabel dearest?" asked the Demonnets' other feminine guest, as the ash blond was about to return the glorious trinket to Madame Demonnet. She stretched out a beautiful hand, above which a beautiful, rounded, white arm shone smooth as alabaster, soft as milk, to the jet shoulder strap of her black dinner dress. She snapped the bracelet upon her arm, and held it before her, admiring the effect. Her eyes, brilliant now with the lust of the gems, sought those of the man opposite her. He smiled and nodded.

"Ah, madame!" she cried. "It is superb! I—— You are sure you can't take it, Mabel dearest?" She interrupted her speech to Madame Demonnet to speak to her friend. "Sure? And I shan't be poaching on your preserves if I tell Madame Demonnet that I want it? Bless you, angel! I should feel like a pig to do you out of anything you wanted and could have, when it is only through you that I have the privilege of knowing Madame Demonnet."

The ash-blond angel, Mabel, made a little gesture of complete surrender, and the other woman turned her excited, greedy eyes upon Madame De-



Then it was that Monty, flashing his customs badge upon the pair, demanded the custody of the jewels in the name of the United States treasury.

monnet. "May I come to see you tomorrow, madame?" she asked. And madame nodded briskly and business-like, and named the hour, as she snapped the ornament upon her own firm, well-rounded, dark-skinned arm.

Lorraine, with eyebrows at an agonized angle of question, asked Monty: "Is she sellin' them?"

"Layin' to," replied Monty.

They looked at each other with strange expressions, Monty's bewildered, hopeful, questioning, Lorraine's large with purpose, almost solemn.

"Order a bottle of the fizz, Monty," she commanded. "I got an idea—oh, but I got an idea!"

Monty ordered the champagne, feeling somewhat nervously in his pocket as he did so; the new régime at the office had made sad inroads upon his "spending money." But Lorraine reassured him.

"I got plenty with me," she told him, flashing the gold-meshed bag before his eyes. "Keep on listenin', Monty—keep on."

But though Monty kept on listening, he heard only the most polite conversation on Salon pictures and the opera in Paris from that moment on.

"I wish you'd tell me what you've got on your mind," grumbled the inspector to his loved one. He could

seldom follow the swift flashes of her intellect, which was one of the charms she had for him. Monty was one of the men who need to have a little uncertainty, a little fear, as to their own security with a woman in order to keep them constant. Lorraine's mental superiority to him supplied the necessary element. At his uneasy desire now to be at once admitted to full council in her plans, she merely laughed.

"You ain't to know a thing," she said, "until I get you somewhere out of this. Ain't you just had an example of what comes of talkin' in a public place?"

"Well, what comes of it?" he demanded densely.

"You're a bird of an inspector!" she sneered, staring at him. "But wait till we get out of this." She lifted a brimming glass of bubbles, yellow as sunlight, and pledged him: "Here's to us an' our chance!"

After that meal, Mr. Redmond and Miss Lee developed quite a taste for the cookery at the Richelieu-Bleecker, and were seen dining in the bright restaurant many times thereafter. Sometimes the Demonnets were also present in the room; sometimes they were not. Occasionally they had guests, and Lorraine noted that the woman with the ash-blond hair and the lethargic husband was almost always one of these. Lorraine took to lunching alone in the restaurant sometimes, and by and by Madame Demonnet had become so used to seeing her that something like a look of recognition flashed into her eyes at sight of the rather crudely made-up and overdressed young woman.

One day in February, Lorraine, lunching alone against the wall at one side of the room, saw Madame Demonnet enter and look for a table. There was something absent-minded in her glance, something not altogether pleased. The table next to Lorraine was vacant, and by and by she made her way toward it, frowning in preoccupation. She seemed unable to give her attention to the menu, and finally gave an order with an air of scarcely knowing what she ordered. Lorraine

watched her until the intensity of her regard brought madame's eyes to her. Lorraine smiled tentatively, and madame, absent-minded still, smiled slightly in response. Lorraine bowed, and the older woman inclined her well-coiffured head. Then she seemed to come out of her daze, to recall that she had no acquaintance, except by sight, with the person who was thus intruding upon her, and she glanced away, out of the window. But Lorraine needed no further encouragement. She left her table and stood opposite Madame Demonnet.

"I do beg your pardon," she cried in the somewhat throaty voice that was her naive imitation of a cultivated tone, "but I have so wanted to speak to you!"

Madame looked up, rather coldly. "Yes?" she said in remarkably clear, but not at all inviting, English.

"Yes," repeated Lorraine, who declined to be abashed. "Oh, Madame Demonnet—of course I know who you are!—I have so often seen you at dinner here! And I have seen your perfectly wonderful jewelry, some of it. I am crazy about jewels," she added childishly.

Madame, herself unadorned, except for two or three rings, looked at the gems with which her interlocutor was decked, and had the air of declaring the display unsuited to daylight wear.

"Yes?" said the French lady again.

"Yes," repeated Lorraine, still resolutely refusing to be snubbed. "Oh, madame! Please pawdon me if I am taking a liberty, or making a mistake. But—are you disposing of any of your gems in this country?"

Madame Demonnet's dark eyes studied the eager, the excited face of the younger woman for a full minute. Then she straightened her shoulders with a sudden gesture of resolution.

"Sit down," she said. "Let us tell the boy to bring your coffee to this table. Now, let us talk."

They talked. Madame Demonnet learned that her vis-à-vis was a Mrs. Vaughan Finley, of Cleveland, Ohio, a woman of wealth and of no particular

position, who was spending the winter in New York. She made an appointment to see Mrs. Finley that evening—if, upon consultation with her husband, she decided to part with any of her jewels! Where should she call Mrs. Vaughan Finley up? Lorraine told her, naming her own gorgeous abode with entire coolness. She arrived there a half hour later, traveling by the subway for the sake of speed, and she told the clerk that her friend, Mrs. Vaughan Finley, was with her, if any one should call that lady up; and, indeed, that Mrs. Finley had been at the Catherine de Medici all the winter, should any one inquire! The clerk and Lorraine smiled comfortably and understandingly upon each other, and the lady proceeded to telephone her friend, Mr. Redmond, to come up as soon as he could.

Meantime, Madame Demonnet consulted her husband. "The woman is obviously not a lady," she said. "But, of course, that's the very sort to have money to fling away—"

"What do you care whether or not she's a lady?" asked monsieur comfortably.

"I don't know why I should. But we've always dealt with ladies before. I don't like contact with this kind."

"But that little Mabel of yours doesn't seem to be doing her work in steering them to you—the kind your fastidious taste prefers—this year."

"No," agreed madame. "Well—I suppose it will do no harm to see her. Mabel says the effects of the panic of nineteen hundred and seven are still felt in New York. Perhaps. I thought there had been time for a recovery. We ought to have gone to Chicago and the West, I think. This person is from Cleveland."

"Well, if this new friend of yours is—"

"Please don't call her that!" exclaimed his wife in some exasperation.

"Well, then, this self-appointed saleswoman—if she buys herself, she may steer some custom of her own sort this way. And it's a good, extravagant kind of custom."

"I wish I felt a little less averse to it," fretted madame.

"Nonsense, dear! Don't be notional!"

So madame decided not to be notional, and she telephoned the lady of the high coloring and the ultra-fashionable cut to her gown that she might come on the following evening and see what madame had to show. And, contrarily, when she heard the light note of indifference in Mrs. Vaughan Finley's voice, her own became a little insistent. And when Mrs. Finley was afraid that she had a theater engagement for the time set by Madame Demonnet, that lady obligingly said that she might come after the theater.

"Mrs. Finley" accordingly arrived at the Richelieu-Bleecker late on the following night. She was, as had been agreed, accompanied by her husband. "Husband!" Madame Demonnet had sneered to her own spouse, in telling him of the arrangement. "However, of course, it doesn't make any difference to us! And he's a lot more likely to be generous with her than if he were her husband!"

When the "Finleys" entered, the gentleman personating that character looked ill at ease, a fact that madame ascribed to a curious, middle-class Americanism she had observed—namely, the average middle-class man's restive discomfort in acknowledging illicit relations. The man was distinctly middle class, she thought, despite the correctness of his evening clothes and certain rather commonplace masculine good looks. She remembered that she had often seen him dining here with the girl. But she greeted him with cordial *empressement*.

"Your wife and I," she told him, "we have struck up a little friendship. She has a desire to rob me of some of my trinkets! I do not wonder—such things in America are so ruinously dear! But you American gentlemen are so generous to your women."

Monty grunted something and moistened his lips. He asked if he was to have the privilege of seeing the things of which his wife had spoken. Mon-

sieur Demonnet, at a signal from madame, went into the adjoining room and came out with a large jewel case. Together, he and Madame Demonnet displayed the "trinkets," many of which Monty remembered well enough.

"And do I understand that you are willing to sell any of these that we may desire?" he asked.

Madame shrugged her shoulders. "Ah, it is not all willingness! It is necessity! My husband—he must needs speculate in your ruinous Wall Street!"

They priced, they debated, they cheapened. Monsieur Demonnet kept a keen eye and a firm hand upon the articles. Finally there was laid aside a little group of the ornaments which the admiring "Mrs. Finley" declared that she could not get on without.

"Now, I'm no jeweler," said Monty. "And neither is my wife here. I suppose you'd have no objection to my bringing in one of our leading jewelers to-morrow to give me an expert opinion on those things?"

But it appeared, at once, that Monsieur and Madame Demonnet would strongly object to that procedure. They spoke of trade jealousies. And finally they spoke of the comparatively small price at which they offered the gems. No American jeweler, they averred, would do them justice, because every American jeweler would be unwilling to see an American customer buying at less than the price he would be forced to ask.

"You mean the goods have paid no duty?" interpreted Monty.

Monsieur Demonnet shrugged gracefully. "Naturally, if they had, they would be from thirty to sixty per cent higher!" he said.

And then it was that Monty, flashing his customs badge upon the pair, demanded the custody of the jewels in the name of the United States treasury.

Madame gave one long, evil look at Lorraine, which the girl returned with a brazen smile. The paint upon her cheeks was augmented now by a brilliant, natural flush of excitement.

For a few minutes the controversy

raged fiercely. The Demonnets professed to disbelieve the claim of their masculine caller to be a customs official, despite the badge that he showed them. He recalled the fact that he had been the inspector assigned to examine their luggage on the pier; he recited to them the little gifts on which they had paid duty. And still they rebelled, though with less assured fervor, against the idea of giving the goods up to him. They declaimed at the outrage, they would consult lawyers, they would involve France and the United States in bloodshed, they would—

"You can do all that you please in that line," said Monty crisply. "But I am going to retain these jewels, brought into this country for the purpose of sale without the payment of duty, for the collector of customs. If you refuse to yield them to me, on exhibition of my badge of authority, and on my receipt for them, very well—I shall remain on guard in these rooms until the collector is at his office in the morning. But leave them in your possession I shall not." His voice rang quite assured, dramatic.

"Perhaps we could arrange a compromise?" suggested Monsieur Demonnet, telegraphing his wife with his eyes.

"Perhaps you can compromise with the United States treasury—you can't with me!" cried Monty nobly. "Come, come—we're wasting time. What do you propose to do? I claim the jewels in the name of the customs collector of the port of New York. I shall not allow them out of my sight until they go into the customhouse safe. Either I stay here with them, or you permit me to take them away. The collection is not worth more than sixty or seventy thousand dollars"—Monty spoke almost contemptuously—"and I have often carried articles of greater value than that about with me. If you still profess to doubt my authority, you may come with me to the nearest police station, and the sergeant at the desk will identify me and reassure you."

They were convinced of his authority by his bold, assured manner. They offered to bribe him again, they offered

to bribe Lorraine. But the couple were Spartan in their civic virtue, and refused to be bribed with all the scorn of the hero and heroine of a melodrama. Finally, accepting a receipt for the valuables, Monsieur Demonnet accompanied Monty and Lorraine to the nearest police station, and Monty briefly explained the situation to the sergeant in charge.

"He's Redmond, all right enough, of the customs service. Guess he's got you this time, Mr. Demonnet. He has the authority to make the seizure."

With dignity, Monsieur Demonnet yielded to the inevitable. He spoke again of his lawyer, and of the outrage to which he had been subjected; and the law, as vested in the drowsy police sergeant and in Monty Redmond, told him that perhaps the collector would agree with his view of the case—but that it was all "up to the collector" now. Whereupon, the group parted for the night. It was about one in the morning, to be exact. The sergeant dozed again behind his desk; Monsieur Demonnet, lighting a cigarette with a shrug, summoned philosophy to his aid and strolled back to his hotel; and Monty and Lorraine disappeared under the shadows of the elevated tracks.

At the earliest possible hour the next morning, Monsieur Demonnet, his wife, and his lawyer were at the customs-house. The collector happened to be a little late that morning. When he came in, he heard the story—obviously for the first time. He withdrew for a conference with some of his subordinates. Then he returned. Mr. Redmond had not yet appeared with the seized jewels, but he would doubtless be there very soon.

"Tricked!" screamed Madame Demonnet. "Tricked! Robbed!"

She fainted. In the confusion attendant upon reviving her, orders were issued for taking Monty Redmond into immediate custody. For the collector had a horrible feeling within him that corroborated madame's sickening intuition.

Monty was not taken into custody

at that time, because Monty could not be found. Neither, as it happened, could Miss Lorraine Lee. Outgoing steamships were watched in vain. Railroad stations throughout the country were patrolled by detectives on the arrival of New York trains. A description of the jewels was telegraphed and cabled to every great jewel center in the world. But Monty Redmond and his Lorraine, and the jewels of Madame Demonnet had dropped as completely out of sight as if they had all been thrown into the river that night when they had left the police station.

Meantime the customs department, perhaps in order to have a club for the belaboring of the Demonnets, who were breathing threats, the least of which was a war between France and the United States, insisted upon examining the possessions of the pair still further. Much interesting jewelry was still to be found; also many enlightening documents, by which it appeared that Monsieur and Madame Demonnet were the agents of a small Belgian syndicate of dealers in contraband gems. It was by no means their first visit to the United States, though it was the first time they had made their entry by the port of New York. They always came well provided with introductions; they always worked with the aid of a lady more or less in society who steered customers to them—for a commission. They always worked cleverly, deftly, and hitherto they had worked successfully.

Despite the disappearance of Monty with the seizure of one night, the government recovered, in duties and in fines upon jewelry previously smuggled and now successfully traced, about forty thousand dollars. Had not the statute of limitations been held to apply to certain earlier transactions of the Demonnets, the amount would easily have been doubled.

Meantime Monty and his accomplice had disappeared and, with unusual luck or cunning, they stayed disappeared for a long time—long, that is, as criminal disappearances go. And if Lorraine's passion for gems had not been a gen-

uine one, they might have evaded detection for a much longer time. But she really loved the glorious, glittering things, and she had insisted upon retaining, in its original form, a pair of bracelets. She had known, appallingly well, where to dispose of the rest of the plunder. Monty sometimes felt himself shiver slightly at the realization of all that she knew concerning international "fences"; it almost frightened him, her familiarity with bold, out-and-out crime.

Well, one night they went up to London from the dreary little English provincial city in which they had been staying, out of sight, and they went, instinctively, straight as homing pigeons, to a gay restaurant. Lorraine's hair and eyebrows were temporarily black now, and Monty the smooth-shaven had yielded to Monty the dark-bearded. His crisply curly black hair of which he had been so proud was grizzled, and it was not altogether Miss Lee's knowl-

edge of the art of make-up that had grizzled it. Anxiety, homelessness, the ennui of a man without a job, without a country, had had their share in bringing white threads into the dark mass of Monty's curls. Both of them flattered themselves that they looked quite unlike the two who had taken leave of Monsieur Demonnet six months before in the shadow of the elevated tracks.

But as Lorraine looked about the res-



The next morning they were arrested, charged with being the absconding Monty Redmond and his accomplice, Lorraine Lee, alias half a dozen other names.

taurant, she felt her blood flow again in her veins as it had been wont to do. Her bold, babyish, inviting eyes stared at the men and women. She preened herself; she made herself conspicuous in a hundred little ways—she could not help doing it! It was life and the joy of life to her to be conspicuous. And when a woman at the next table to her flashed a snaky bracelet before the eyes of all the diners, Lorraine, overbold, overdaring, pulled her long white gloves from her forearms, where they had wrinkled up to meet the apple-green and pink chiffon of her frock, and with a proud, conscious touch, arranged her wonderful bracelets, set with square-cut emeralds, each one in a tiny rim of diamonds, and square-cut diamonds, each in a rim of emeralds.

The ostentatious air of the girl attracted attention; the glitter of the stones caught the eye of a man seated at a near-by table. He looked carefully at the trinket. Then he looked very carefully at the wearer of it, and at her companion. He did not lose sight of them again that evening. And the next morning they were arrested while they were at breakfast in their suite in a gaudy hotel to which they had resorted, charged with being the absconding Monty Redmond and his accomplice, Lorraine Lee, alias half a dozen other names. The gentleman at the next table the night before, had, unfortunately for the pair, been Major Watkins, special agent of the United States treasury department, in charge in Europe, and he had come to London from his headquarters in Paris, on business, that very day.

When the case came up for investigation, it was shown that Monty and his inamorata, instead of trying to escape from New York at once after their daring coup, had adopted the much less hazardous plan of retiring to a dingy section of the Bronx for two or three weeks; here they lived in a dingy flat as a carpenter out of work,

and his wife. Then, slightly disguised, they managed to board, unrecognized, a steamer to the West Indies, and thence they sailed to England. After that they had drifted to the Continent. They had removed the stones from their settings, and had disposed of them for less than a third of their value in Amsterdam. And they had spent the rest of the time skulking through Europe, and hiding in dull little places, waiting until they dared reappear in the gayer centers that were more to their taste.

It was, however, when they had been sent back to the United States, difficult to tell exactly what to do with them. The Demonnets, whom they had robbed, had disappeared after the payment of the old duties and the fines; they could not be found to return to testify against the pair of thieves. They were the only witnesses against them, for the police sergeant who had obligingly identified Monty on the night of the robbery could testify to nothing but the fact of his own identification; which, while it would have been strong corroboratory evidence, was not direct enough to be worth a great deal to the prosecutor. The result of the tangle was that the case never came to trial.

But the weeks that the pair spent in the Tombs aged and sobered them considerably. When they emerged, they counted what remained to them of their booty, and although it was not enough for the realization of Monty's old dream about the Westchester stock farm, it afforded a foundation for Lorraine's egg business, which she and her husband are conducting in New Jersey, near enough to Atlantic City to insure them a market for eggs and broilers, to say nothing of a place for an occasional life-saving splurge into the glitter of restaurant life.

"You can use brains in the chicken business as well as in some others I've tried," says Mrs. Monty Redmond. "An' the funny thing is, I really believe the returns are better in the end!"

"The Honest Lace Merchant," the seventh of this series of stories of up-to-date smugglers that Virginia Middleton has written for SMITH'S, will appear in the May number.



On the Credit Side

By Wallace Irwin

ILLUSTRATED BY H.Y. MAYER

I MET friend Henry at the bar;
We'd been apart for seven years.
Friend Henry's look was kind o' far,
But mine was very near to tears.

"Friend Hank," says I, with right good will,
"This meetin' thrills me, for I know
You'll pay that twenty-dollar bill
I lent you seven years ago."

"Friend John," says Henry, "since you so
Recall them matters I detest,
I'll say that many years ago
I paid that bill with interest."

"Oh, tell me how!" I bought the beer.
"How claim them facts alleged, to wit:
That you in some remoter year
Did pay to me that deficit?"

Says Hank: "The Wise Men tell us how
Our Reputation we should hold
As somethin' finer than a scow
All loaded down with pearls and gold.

"Well, John, through all them years that's spelled
Estrangement both to you and me,
You can't imagine how I've held
Your Reputation up fer ye!

"Fer instance, once in far Peru
Friend Tim says: 'John's a stingy bloke!'
I answers: 'Tim, that can't be true,
For John spends dough on *me* like smoke.'

"And once, in Guam, friend Arthur groaned:
'John beats his wife!' I answered he:
'Perhaps. But *that* can be condoned,
Fer he's been nought but kind to me.'

"Some says you drink, some says you lie,
Some rail at your dishonest ways;
These charges though I can't deny,
Still yer redeemin' traits I praise.

"Yer lavish hand I've boosted true
Till some believe it—so you see
The triflin' sum that I O U
Ain't half so much as U O Me."

I wrung that sailor's manly mitt
In gratitude, a pleasant pain.
And tried to square the deficit
By payin' for the beer again.





THE WAY of a MAID

By Leigh Gordon Giltner

Author of "A Belated Blossoming," "Foursome," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. PUGSLEY

YOU needn't be cross about it, Rex"—Lucy always puts one in the wrong like that—"when I've made a special point of considering your preferences and prejudices—"

"That's the limit, Lucy," I interposed. "Considering my preferences, indeed—when you're planning to cork me up for a whole fortnight in the house with a ravening suffragette! You know perfectly well that sea serpents and suffragettes have about equal attractions for me. And—you'd as well confess the worst—I'll wager she's of the militant type! In any case, because I'm the hostess' brother, I'm in for a thoroughly lovely time of it. I'll be harangued and argued with and put down and trodden under foot till I haven't an atom of self-respect remaining in my composition. And I can't have a telegram urging my immediate return to town sent me because I've promised to see you through with this ghastly house-party thing! But I do think you've given me a raw deal, Lucy. If you'd taken my preference into account, you'd have asked some nice, comfy, girly-girly maidens. You know the sort I fancy—"

"The archaic clinging-vine type?" asked Lucy aggravatingly—adding hastily, as she saw my expression, "That's just what I've done, dear. I've asked Sylvia Langley. Surely she's pretty, and silly, and doll-babyish enough to suit the most perverted taste?"

"A pippin," I pronounced, but with-

out any particular enthusiasm. A fellow likes a girl to have *some* brains.

"And Leslie Galbraith," pursued Lucy, intent on her theme. "Does she happen to please your erratic fancy?"

"Oh, Leslie's all right in her way," I ipdorsed noncommittally.

"And Ellen Ingram; had to have her because I wanted her brother, though she's terribly tiresome. And," working skillfully up to her climax, "I'm asking a charming young girl who crossed on the *Mauretania* with us this spring. Clyde and I both fell in love with her—and I'm sure you'll follow suit, Rex. I can't adequately describe her, but I'm sure she'd figure in your patois as 'a peach.'"

"Maybe," I assented rather dubiously; Lucy's taste in girls doesn't always coincide with mine. "But charm she never so wisely, 'the suffragette will git me'—so what's the use?"

"You're wretchedly prejudiced, Reggie," my sister pouted. "Violet's a dear, and not a bit rabid, and I'm sure you'd like her if you'd let yourself. The suffragette's not half so black as she's painted. The men I've asked—"

"I'm not interested in the men," I contributed grouchy.

"You must pretend to be. You'll have to look after them for me, Rex. Clyde will be in town at his office all day, and you'll simply have to play host. They're all friends of yours—Lispensard Ingram, Jimmy Cruger, Jack Livingston, and Sam Carstairs—"

"Pretty decent bunch," I approved;

then, with a sudden burst of inspiration, "I say, Lucy, why not shunt this Violet person onto Sam Carstairs? He's no end good-natured, and some classy sprinter. Or, if you think that would be taking a base advantage of an unsuspecting guest, at least assure this shrinking Violet of yours—would she were even so!—that, while I should personally be pleased to present her and her sister shriekers with the right of suffrage, I've really very little voice in the conduct of the nation, after all! Why do your sex clamor so persistently for the ballot, Lucy? What do you want with it when you get it? Why can't you women be content to do the home-and-fireside stunt, and find an outlet for your energies amusing babies and affixing buttons—"

"Rex, you're a walking anachronism!" Lucy exclaimed disgustedly. "You should have lived in the good old days when women devoted their talents to working samplers and antimacassars—whatever they may be!—and took their opinions ready-made from their lords and masters."

"They might have done worse," I piously observed. "They might do worse even now." But Lucy flounced off, pretending not to hear.

The Violet person—Miss Violet Farrar was her proper appellation—proved not half bad, after all. She didn't argue or talk shop; she played better golf than any man in the party assembled at Oaklawn; she was a tiger at tennis; and she not only drove Clyde's big foreign car as skillfully as his French chauffeur, but even pointed out to that lordly individual the location and cause of a slight "knock" her acute ear at once detected. On the whole, she was a handsome, fresh-colored, good-natured, and not unattractive girl. But she wasn't a bit my style. Neither was Sylvia—quite. She was pretty—even lovely in a dolly fashion, but she demanded a continuous performance of compliment and love-making which was rather a strain at times. Leslie Galbraith was what the men pronounced a "good scout," a pretty, tact-

ful girl, palpably in love with Jack Livingston. Ellen Ingram was just ballast—pretty poor material at that.

But—the other girl! No wonder Lucy had saved her for her climax. She was, in truth, the acme of all things perfect. She was daintily pretty and deliciously timid and shy. She seldom spoke, but when she did, her voice held the silver music of a rippling brook. Her hair was pure spun gold; her eyes wood violets—but what's the use? No wonder Lucy couldn't adequately describe her; I couldn't myself, and I've rather a gift of language where the fair sex is concerned. I made up my mind the moment I met Lucy's star attraction—Ione Stewart was her poetic cognomen—that if she would but smile upon me, my peace could never be broken by all the militant suffragettes Lucy could muster.

With a fine regard for my position as host—understudy for my brother-in-law, who grubbed in his Wall Street office all day that my pretty sister might live as the lilies of the field, and be arrayed, if not like Solomon in all his glory, at least in the latest Paquin creation—I figured out what struck me as a very neat and satisfactory arrangement. Lisenard was to play cavalier to Miss Langley—he seemed to like the rôle; I trusted Leslie's cleverness to keep Livingston perennially at her side; Jimmy and Sam were to amuse Misses Farrar and Ingram alternately, arranging the shifts to suit themselves. What was the good of being host pro tem if I could not enjoy my privileges? And so I unanimously appointed myself first lord in waiting and devotee extraordinary to the charming Miss Stewart. But unfortunately my puppets refused to be pulled by the invisible thought wires I had skillfully attached to them. The men contracted an annoying habit of annexing themselves to Miss Stewart's train, while the other girls talked vivaciously to one another, and tried to look as if they were enjoying themselves.

I'm not specially susceptible, but before the end of the first week I found myself figuratively at Miss Stewart's



The men contracted an annoying habit of annexing themselves in Miss Stewart's train, while the other girls talked vivaciously to one another, and tried to look as if they were enjoying themselves.

exquisitely and most expensively shod little feet. So were the rest of the men. Even Sam Carstairs, warranted to make love automatically to anything he was led up to, and therefore in steady demand for house parties, refused to be saddled with Miss Farrar, and reneged when it came to Miss Ingram, and hung about the fair Ione constantly, looking the while fearfully and wonderfully like an amiable hippopotamus. Sam's nearest friend couldn't deny that he is strikingly unbeautiful. Also, he was fearfully in the way. About the time I'd felicitate myself upon having neatly paired off the others so that I might have Ione to myself for a blissful few moments, that idiot would come lumbering up. Ione would smile at him—the poet doesn't live who could do jus-

tice to that smile of hers—and he'd beam back inanely and settle his huge bulk beside or between us as opportunity offered. I've always felt a large, patient charity for Nero and Lucretia Borgia and Henry the Eighth since then!

And before I could devise any plausible scheme for getting rid of Sam, Lisperard Ingram—an Apollo up to date, and eminently aware of the fact—would saunter up. Then good-looking Jack Livingston, religiously trailed by Leslie, would join the group, and possibly that little duffer, Cruger. Lucy loyally did her best for me, but one might as well try to detach a needle from a magnet as to keep an unattached man from the side of a preternaturally pretty girl.

Yet—perhaps I was a conceited cad



Her long lashes drooped; her lips were quivering. A wild hope surged up in my heart.

—I somehow grew to fancy that Lone, whose tact was too perfect to admit of any open display of personal preference, showed me in a hundred subtle ways that I was—well, we'll say rather less distasteful to her ladyship than Carstairs. Within three days she was wearing my frat pin and class ring, and I was tremendously set up till I chanced to notice on her slender hand a deep-set ruby that Lispenard Ingram had been wearing. Nor was I entusiast-

cally pleased when one day she lost a cuff link on the tennis court, and Livingston insisted upon substituting a diamond-studded pair of his own. It was all right that I should make oblation at her shrine, but there was no necessity for the other man to follow my example. And the painful part of it was that she accepted our devoirs impartially, flashing that wonderful smile on each of us in turn, until we were convinced that, as compared with her,

the fabled Circe was a paltry four-flusher.

And she had such a way with her—such a pretty, clinging, dependent little way! When she finished a sentence with a “Don’t you think so?” with just the faintest accent on the personal pronoun, and just the prettiest possible lift of her lashes, I was fain to commit myself to the most heretical sentiment—even “votes for women.” If Violet Farrar could have acquired just that trick of the lashes and just that appealing tone of voice, she wouldn’t have needed to argue. We’d have fallen in with her views—to a man.

I’d quite made up my mind, regardless of the fact that none of us, not even Lucy or Clyde, knew anything of the girl’s antecedents, to propose to Ione Stewart if that quartet of born idiots would ever give me the chance. But fortune failed to smile. When I woke one morning to find that my adored one had gone into the city by an early train, when I’d have given my favorite hunter for the privilege of driving her up in one of Clyde’s cars, I felt that the Fates were in league against me. But the very next day they relented. I can’t figure how it came about, unless by Miss Stewart’s own management, but I found myself actually and absolutely alone with her for a full half hour.

Ione was somehow not herself. Her manner was abstracted, even troubled. We exchanged banalities for perhaps ten minutes, then she turned to me to say:

“There is something I wish to tell you, something I must tell you, Mr. Stuyvesant. You and your sister, for all your wonderful kindness, know very little about me. Indeed, there is little to tell. Mr father was a man of great wealth—supposedly. I was brought up in the utmost luxury, but when he died, I found myself practically penniless, alone in the world, except for an elderly, semi-invalid aunt. I need not dwell upon our struggles, our pitiful efforts to make ends meet. But for the kindness of my many friends, with whom I spend most of my time, it would be

impossible to make Aunt Anna’s pitance and the trifle saved from the wreck of my father’s fortune suffice our needs. I am leaving Oaklawn to-morrow.”

My heart skipped a beat. How earnestly I yearned to announce in the presence of a reliable minister and the requisite witnesses: “With all my worldly goods I thee endow!”

“I don’t want to distress any one or spoil Lucy’s pleasant party,” Ione pursued, “so I shall simply put my departure on the ground that my aunt is not strong and needs me. But it is rather I myself— Mr. Stuyvesant, I went to town yesterday to consult a specialist. I have not been well for months, and I wanted to know the worst. Doctor Davis tells me that I—in short, I find I must submit, at once, to an operation. A minor operation, he termed it, assuring me that there was no possible danger. But one never knows. And if I—if I should never wake—my heart is not strong, and the thought of the anæsthetic frightens me a little—I want to thank you for all your kindness to me. You and Lucy have been angelic to me, and whether I live or die—”

“Die!” The word sent an icy shudder through my veins. She could not, *must not* die, this peerless being! She, with all her loveliness, her charm, her sweetness, to fade as a flower! The thought maddened me.

“Ione!” I cried wildly. “You can’t, you shan’t, you mustn’t die! Why, dear, I love you, love you so that all the powers of darkness could not take you away from me. I won’t let you die! You’ve got to live instead—live for me, my own, my darling!”

Ione did not speak. Turning to look at her, I saw that an exquisite rose flush was dyeing the pale ivory of cheek and brow; her long lashes drooped; her lips were quivering. A wild hope surged up in my heart.

“Ione, dearest,” I whispered, “is it possible? Can you, do you care?” And though her whispered “yes” was so low I must needs bend very close to hear it, it ran clarion clear through heart, and

soul, and brain. She loved me—this wonderful girl! And she was going to live—for me! I yearned to gather her into my arms, and still the hunger of days with kisses pressed on lip, and cheek, and throat, but now—with the shadow of death brooding over her—it seemed almost sacrilege to think of it. I stooped and kissed her brow tenderly, almost reverently. Then I drew from my finger a regal solitaire that was a family heirloom, and slipped it on her slender finger, where it hung ludicrously loose and large.

"There!" I said, with the lover's pride of possession. "That gives me the right to protect and care for you always. I shall begin this instant. You're not to worry any more. It will be my pleasure to look after you the rest of your life. Operations are costly things, my dear"—she seemed so little and helpless and young that I found myself talking to her as if she had been a child—"and I claim the right to assume all your financial burdens—until you can repay me—many thousandfold—by giving me your precious self. Ione, dear, you'll grant me this privilege? There is so little I can do for you. Let me assume this—as well as any other obligations you may have. It tortures me to think of your suffering. My one comfort is that perhaps my tiresome money may help to buy you renewed health and relieve your mind of worry. It would make me happy to be permitted to help you, Ione. Dear, say I may!"

She hesitated a long moment, alternately flushing and paling, her little hands twisting themselves together in her lap, distress and humiliation writ large on her expressive little face, while I inwardly cursed the cruel poverty that made it necessary for her to accept aid even from the man who loved her. At last, with a palpable effort, she spoke.

"You are more than generous, Rex," she said gently, "and I accept your offer—on one condition: that you remain at Oaklawn till it is all over—happily over, we'll believe. I prefer to undergo the ordeal alone. It would

unnerve me to think you were even near the scene of my suffering—and I shall need all my courage and strength. Then, dear, when the worst is over, you may come to me if you will. Please promise, Rex."

Which, perforce, I did.

It was cruelly hard to let her go away, knowing as I did that there was the chance—there is always that grisly chance, however we boast the marvels of our modern surgery—that I might not see her again. The bare thought stifled me. I could not, simply could not, sit around those empty rooms—strange how empty the absence of the best beloved can make a crowded house!—and gossip with a bevy of giggling girls. Equally impossible was it to golf or play billiards with a lot of stupid men. So I made some inane excuse, and strolled out with my cigar, hoping to be able to fight my anxiety to a finish, and recover my poise before I reappeared. But scarce had I seated myself in Lucy's pet pergola, and given myself up to melancholy musing, when I became suddenly aware that that ass Carstairs was at my heels.

"Pardon if I intrude, old chap," he said, and I now perceived that his habitual idiotic grin was distorted into a species of agonized grimace that bespoke pain unspeakable, "but I've got to tell somebody. I'm in trouble, Rex—the worst way. I—you know Miss Stewart attributed her leaving to the illness of her aunt. That was all a fake. It's she herself— Good heavens, Rex, that poor, game little soul has gone up alone—she hasn't even told Lucy, and she made me swear not to mention it—to submit to an operation! I'm half crazy! Stuyvesant, if that girl dies— But she can't die, she simply mustn't. I'd give every dollar I have in the world"—Sam's dollars mounted into millions, rumor said—"to save her. And the child is pitifully poor, it seems. She didn't even have the necessary amount—great Cæsar, Rex, she was thinking of a charity hospital!—but I made her let me finance



One by one we rose and silently sneaked off to the billiard room.

the operation. You see, Rex, she's promised to marry me."

I sprang up as if galvanized.

"Say that again, Sam," I urged stupidly. "Marry you? Why, Jupiter, man, she's promised to marry me!" We faced each other for a long moment, amazement, bewilderment, and dismay on each startled countenance.

"Do you mean to say," Sam queried slowly, "that Miss Stewart— See here, Stuyvesant, this begins to look

queer to me. Did she hand you that sob story, and did you fall for it?"

"I don't care to discuss my private affairs," I said stiffly.

Sam nodded thoughtfully. I'd always considered Carstairs a stupid oaf, though he's accounted pretty shrewd on the Street, but I'll have to admit that he arrived long before I began to perceive that we had, in the vernacular, been backed into a siding.

"I see," Sam said simply. "But

maybe you wouldn't mind stating how long your engagement has existed?"

"Since yesterday morning at ten-thirty, to be exact," I snapped.

"And at eleven-ten precisely she was assuring me that I was the only man she could ever love," mused Sam, looking more than ever like a pachyderm. "Pretty stiff statement that—but I took the cork well under, and on the strength of it, drove over to town yesterday aft and brought her the sum of—well, more than I care to say. Now, look here, Stuyvesant, we've been stung—that's all there is to it. Shall we keep it dark?" And I gladly agreed that we should.

That evening, all during dinner, which seemed interminable, Sam and I exchanged furtive glances of fellowship and commiseration. Our castles had tumbled about our ears, leaving us dazed and bewildered. All we could now do was, as Sam put it, "to keep up a front."

But when dinner was at last over, and we were all gathered on the piazza, Lucy suddenly burst out:

"She said I wasn't to sadden you by telling you, but I simply can't keep it any longer. It's too terrible for words, and I want some one to share it with me. Listen, good people. Dear Ione is to-night in a city infirmary being prepared for an operation. They say it's a minor one, and the danger is slight—but one never knows—"

Here Lucy broke into audible sobs, with Ellen and Sylvia swelling the chorus. I stole a glance at each of the men in turn. Every countenance wore an odd expression. I wondered. Presently Livingston spoke:

"Miss Stewart told me of this last evening. I—in fact, there's a sort of

—an understanding between us, I may say, and I'm to go to her the moment the operation is over."

I looked at Carstairs. His lips silently formed the words: "One more unfortunate."

"I beg your pardon," Lispenard Ingram's quiet, well-bred voice interposed, "but Miss Stewart confided in me also, and I had the honor——"

He stopped abruptly. The traditions of the caste of Vere de Vere forbade his mention of the melancholy fact—which I learned later—that he, too, had, as Sam expressed it, felt "the touch of a vanished hand"—to the tune of some hundreds.

"Why, see here, fellows," Jimmy Cruger cut in excitedly—no amount of traditions could restrain Jimmy—"Miss Stewart engaged herself to me last evening, and to clinch it let me lend her a hundred to tide her over till her next check comes from her uncle in California."

Sam's sardonic grin was a tribute to Miss Stewart's powers of invention.

"Why, Clyde had arranged all that," Lucy interposed. "Ione explained that she was temporarily in straitened circumstances, and Clyde offered to arrange for any amount——"

"Stung," said Sam solemnly. He offered it as a general observation, but every man present made personal application of the remark. One by one we rose and silently sneaked off to the billiard room, leaving the ladies to assure one another that "somehow they had never quite liked or trusted Miss Stewart." Parenthetically, I may mention that we never again saw or heard of the fair deceiver.

Next morning I golfed with Violet Farrar.





A Quiet Week-End

By Kate Jordan

Author of "The Creeping Tides," "The Millionaires," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HAROLD THOMAS DENISON

No. — *Half Moon Street,*
London.

Thursday morning, September —

DEAREST Sister Alecia: I am willing to stake my life that no chaperon that ever set sail from American shores has passed through a more upsetting experience than I did from last Saturday to Sunday night—and all through an inspiration of your very original daughter's! Oh, why cannot Virginia be like at least a few of the American girls who leave their own country—conservative to an extent, and with some regard for appearances?

But to start clearly. You know she definitely promised to marry Sir George Rubbledale and live in the fascinating old priory in Sussex. She soon changed that and put him on a sort of probation while she flirted a bit with that Oxford boy, Billy Bush, who has always been her shadow from his first sight of her. To these two strings she has lately added a third—a Captain Gerald Falconer in His Majesty's Foot Guards. I must say this latter person, while not as rich as Sir George, is ten years younger—just thirty-two—and almost too good looking. Virginia seems to love running about with him.

I asked her the other day if she had made up her mind which of the three she would marry. She amazed me with the following noncommittal statement:

"That adorable Gerald has never *yipped* a word of such a thing! If he

did, I have an idea, Aunt Sue, that Sir George would go into the discard!"

"Nice treatment for a peer of Great Britain!" I could not help exclaiming.

"Horrible," she said with one of those demure smiles of hers that, I must confess, are hard to withstand. "I wish I knew myself. I can't help feeling that Sir George will always be a *fuss cat*, and that Billy has a great idea of his own importance, but that Gerald," she said softly, "would always be a big, sweet, jolly, resourceful boy. Oh, I wish something would happen as a test! I must marry an *amiable* man for, I tell you this, Aunt Sue—if I don't, we'll soon be throwing things at each other, and I could tell to a nicety where to land an omelet!"

As if some malign imp had heard these words, Alecia, the *something happened*—and happened over a week-end. After a round of gayety from Monday to Friday—entirely too much for a woman of my years and heavy build—I was preparing for an absolutely restful time over the Sabbath. Judge if I had it!

On Saturday morning, Captain Falconer happened to run across Virginia when she was matching some samples for me on Regent Street. Needless to say, as soon as he saw her, he did not stir from her side. No doubt about it, she has something that attracts all men to her. But I do not think this is necessarily a compliment, Alecia. I some-

times think these Englishmen watch her as they would some curious bug or a runaway horse. Be that as it may, she telephoned me that she was lunching with Captain Falconer at Prince's, and—where do you suppose they were going afterward? To the Zoo! Isn't that like Virginia? No normal girl, over fifteen years of age, would have thought of such a thing! I expostulated with her over the telephone.

"What will Sir George say to this, should he call?" I demanded.

so that you'll have plenty of time to rest."

"I'll be on hand so that I'll be all ready when they come," she laughed. "You don't suppose I'd keep them waiting—*alone*? Why, Aunt Sue, something terrible might happen! You know that those two are horribly jealous of each other! When we got into the parlor, we might find them mutually destroyed—just fragments—among which we'd recognize Sir George's monocle and Billy's gold cigarette case!"



With a final flourish of his hat, Captain Falconer stepped into the taximeter cab.

"Don't tell him," she said, in a most untroubled voice.

"Why did you think of this grotesque expedition," I continued, "on a Saturday afternoon when all the *hoi polloi* will be there watching the messy animals?"

"That was the reason it occurred to Gerald, Aunt Sue. He wanted me to see the poor people having their pleasure!"

"You haven't by any chance," I hastened to say ironically, "forgotten that, through you, Sir George has asked Mr. Billy Bush to dine with us to-night? I insist that you get here by five o'clock.

I give you her remarks in detail. Alecia, so you may see how irritatingly she tries to make me suppose that she does not realize I am annoyed. Instead of replying to this nonsense, I hung the receiver up very sharply.

Did she arrive at five? She did not. Nor until three-quarters of an hour later. Of course, as we were not to dine until eight—as is usual here—there was plenty of time. Yet I wanted her to bathe without hurry, for I felt sure her entire person would *reek* of that menagerie smell. (As a matter of fact, it did not, but that is neither here nor there. She *should* have come earlier.)

I was watching from the window when her taximeter cab stopped at the door. Captain Falconer alighted first. He was laughing. Then he handed Virginia out—or I should say *lifted* her out by hooking her under the arm, for she was carrying a square, wooden box not unlike a child's tool chest. She also was laughing. They both kept peeping into this box. But at last I heard the thump of the knocker, and, with a final flourish of his hat, Captain Falconer stepped into the taximeter cab. A moment later I heard Virginia coming up the stairs, and waited—*rigid*—for, my dear Alecia, she was making the most *mysterious*, crooning, cooing sort of sounds between her breaths! She turned the knob and then pushed the door with her foot, facing me, her eyes so bright and dancing they fairly hypnotized me into silence. After closing the door, she leaned against it. This is what rippled from her:

"I *know* I'm late, Aunt Sue. I *should* have hurried. The Zoo is smelly. I *am* a trial! *But*—will you make up?"

"Virginia, you are—ridiculous!" was all I could find to say.

She came nearer. "Oh, don't stay—mad!" she cried, and put up her face. "Kiss me!" And as she spoke, she hugged the box against her.

"What have you there?" I demanded. But she wouldn't budge until I kissed her. It was a mere peck, but it satisfied her.

"What's in that box?" I asked again.

"Give a guess! Something from the Zoo!"

The words disturbed me.

"You know we can't have a bird here. Such a fuss! Mrs. Crush would not *wish* to have to look after it when we are away."

"Not a bird!" she cried, and placed the box on the table. "Peep in, Aunt Sue!"

Alecia—I peeped. Then I—very nearly—*fainted*. The box had a glass cover, and below it I saw a horrid, coiled, green, glittering thing that heaved sullenly like the sea.

"My snake!" said Virginia calmly, as if introducing me to it. "Captain Fal-

coner got it for me from some big dig-nitary in the Zoo. It's name is Daisy."

I had sunk into a chair, terrified, but the whole proceeding suddenly struck me as defiantly insolent. I arose, took her by the shoulders, and shook her as if I were demented.

"How dare you bring reptiles into my presence?" I asked.

"There's only one," she said meekly, when she was able to speak.

She began to soothe me. She said the beast was quite harmless, a pet of the Zoo; that every one loved Daisy. She went on to say—while it sickened me to hear—that the keeper had wound it around her shoulders just to show how mild and friendly it could be!

Of course I insisted that it be taken off the premises at once. But Virginia pleaded. As she very properly said: Where could she remove it? Who would accept it? Who, indeed! And she couldn't throw it out with the refuse, for that would be cruel. But she faithfully promised to return it the next day to the Zoo.

So I had to permit it to remain. She left it on the table, putting a book over the cover—but not before she had pulled the lid back a little and had chirruped down at it in a cozy manner!

"How you can do that to a slimy snake is a mystery to me!" I said, shuddering, as I went into the bedroom to dress.

"Even if it is a snake," said Virginia, as she followed, "it has some feelings! Besides, as it's a lady snake, it may have nerves, and I wanted it to know it's safe."

All this took time. Also, Mrs. Crush was very late with the hot water for the bath. As a result, we were not nearly dressed when Sir George arrived. No doubt, and very naturally, he had hoped for a little tête-à-tête ahead of time with Virginia. *No such comfort!*

Now, to understand what took place later, you must realize, Alecia, that the back parlor, where we have two single beds, is divided by double doors from the front parlor. So you see how, as we dressed, we could talk to a caller through the chink of the doors. Vir-

ginia assured Sir George that we would not be long, told him—although I tried to silence her—about the snake, and advised him to look through the glass at it. He must have done so. She asked him what he thought of it. He replied that its unfitness in *any home* was his strongest impression regarding it.

"You see!" I whispered guardedly, in a miserable sort of triumph to Virginia. "He is gradually coming to regard you as *eccentric*—and no wonder!"

She made a grimace as she held out her foot for Jiggins to put on her slipper, and said in a voice that the maid could distinctly hear:

"George is so perfect he gives me the willies."

At that moment the sound of the maid ushering in Mr. Bush came to us. He greeted Sir George in his very noisy, college manner, and we could hear Sir George respond quietly and briefly.

"The evening is going to be about ten degrees Fahrenheit," Virginia murmured, as she powdered wildly.

I don't know exactly what happened then in the front room, but first came gasping murmurs, then loud exclamations, the crash of chairs falling, and at last Mr. Bush's voice, very loud and impatient:

"If you *knew*, Sir George, why didn't you *tell* me?"

"What's up, Billy?" Virginia called through the seam of the doors.

"Why, I didn't know it was a *snake*!" he cried. "I thought——"

The snake! I had felt sure this had been at the bottom of the trouble, whatever it was! We were ready now, and Virginia was about to push the doors open. But I held her back, and took the precaution to whisper in, first:

"Is it safe for us to enter?"

"Oh, quite safe!" said Billy Bush with an angry sort of snicker.

Upon this we ventured in, and our eyes fell upon a disturbed scene. Mr. Bush was on his knees peering up the chimney. Sir George was huddled on the high arm of the lounge, his coat tails drawn around him guardedly, and his legs crossed in Turkish fashion. Chairs were overturned, a vase broken.

And the wooden box—still on the table, but with its glass cover off—*was empty!*

From the confused explanation that followed, we learned that Mr. Bush, seeing that the box contained something alive, had expected only a turtle or a lizard, and before Sir George had thought of warning him, had opened it. Although he had done so guardedly, the snake had flashed out with incredible swiftness and, there being no fire in the grate, had vanished up the chimney.

Well, my dear, there was the situation! The two men, while politely controlling their feelings, were nevertheless plainly antagonistic. Mr. Bush went into a temper and declared that Sir George should have told him what the box contained. Sir George grew like ice, and said he did not dream that it would have occurred to any visitor to open a box belonging to another. (This last was quite true. How I dislike these effusive, conceited college boys!)

You can imagine that the prospect of dinner together under these circumstances was anything but cheering. I must say that here Virginia rose to the occasion and succeeded in pouring oil on the troubled waters. She made light of the whole incident; said that a very natural mistake had been made by everybody—herself included, as she had left the snake exposed. Now it was gone and there was an end to it, and we were all to forget it.

I ventured, before we left, to speculate as to its possible return. But Virginia mocked at this.

"How could it, Aunt Sue?" she asked. "After rambling over the roofs, it couldn't *know* which chimney to come down again! I'll bet that by this time it has wriggled into somebody's parlor a square off and frightened some poor thing into fits! Too bad!"

However, to be completely satisfied, I insisted on Jiggins stuffing the space between the folding doors and the floor with thick newspapers.

"At any rate," I said, "if it *does* come back while we are out, it will be confined to *this room*, and we'll be able to locate it as soon as we return."



"Please!" cried Virginia, stepping between them. "Don't make such a frightful fuss over nothing!"

Jiggins was directed to go to her room at the top of the house and not to enter the parlors during our absence.

I thought I could finish this letter at a sitting, Alecia, but I find I cannot. I am still feeling the shock that I'll tell you about to-morrow. Nurse says I must relax for the rest of the afternoon. I lie quite flat, iced cloths on my head, a hot water bottle at my feet.

The next day. I won't attempt, Alecia, to describe the dinner. It should never have been attempted. It was, of course, the result of a mad suggestion of Virginia's to Sir George—an attempt to make him accept Mr. Bush as a mutual friend. "The lion and the lamb sitting down together," as she had expressed it.

The dreary meal—at the Savoy—ended at last, and so did the evening at the theater. I was never more glad to reach home. As Mr. Bush was stopping at the Berkeley, quite near us, he came to the door with us. We were all in Sir George's motor.

By this time, owing to the lateness of the hour and the fact that I had been nervous the entire evening, the thought of entering our quiet parlor unprotected unnerved me. I asked Sir George to go up with us to give us confidence. At this Mr. Bush said he would also come—although he had not been asked. But Virginia was delighted to have him.

"One to catch the snake, and one to hold the box, and me to fan Aunt Sue!" she cried.

This gayety had no effect whatever upon any of us. The men were tired of the evening, and the idea that the reptile *might* have crawled back began to trouble me sickeningly.

My confidence was restored on entering the room. The paper was undisturbed under the doors. We searched every inch of space in the parlor—no snake. I was almost satisfied, when an overpowering inspiration came to me.

"Suppose it is lurking in the chimney—*waiting*?" I asked.

"Waiting for what?" Virginia demanded.

"I don't know—but—just waiting."

I could not get rid of this idea. Yet—how to search the chimney? Mr. Bush made himself so comfortable, evidently meaning not to inconvenience himself in the least, that it spurred Sir George to action. He flung off his coat—after duly apologizing—and, before I could beg him not to think of such a thing, *was on his knees before the grate*. There he knelt, Alecia, cuffs rolled back—and in his beautiful white bengaline waistcoat—wildly thrusting his arms up the chimney and peering. In consequence a terrible thing happened—soot rolled down, and he was soon enveloped in a black cloud. You can imagine my mortification. This to have happened in *my* apartment to a British nobleman!

He did not like it at all. When Virginia made futile attempts at brushing him, he glowered. Mr. Bush's laughter, meanwhile, was really insulting.

"Why did you come up, Billy," Virginia demanded angrily, "if you don't lend a hand? Do you think yourself decorative enough to be a study in *still life*?"

"Well, Sir George is so vigorous, you see," he sneered, and still never stirred.

"If you had not been so *vigorous* in the first place and opened the box," was Sir George's fierce answer, "the peculiar discomfort of this most *exceptionable evening* would have been avoided!"

"Please!" cried Virginia, stepping between them. "Don't make such a frightful fuss over nothing!"

As Sir George turned angrily to her, she was unwise enough to laugh—the soot did give him such a strange, foggy appearance.

"You call this nothing?" he demanded. "Well, I only trust you have adventured into zoölogy for the last time!"

"Oh, I have," she replied, and added meaningly: "That is not the *only* thing I've done for the last time!"

He did not ask her to explain—just went. But in those words I had sensed farewell to him.

Billy Bush tried to ingratiate himself with Virginia, before he, too, left.

"Good night," she said curtly, with a

chill curling of the lip. "I shall not forget, Billy, how you did all you could to wipe out the mistakes of the evening and make it pleasant." Then she looked him steadily in the eye. "*Not!*" She added this clearly and contemptuously, and swung out of the room.

As a result of all these things, Alecia, I had a troubled sleep, full of nightmares. One moment I was on my knees to Virginia, imploring her not to break with Sir George; the next I was like a drunkard, beating off crawling things. Lobsters that wore sailor hats with gay striped bands—like Billy Bush's—crawled over me; and an olive that I was about to eat suddenly turned into a woolly, squirmy caterpillar.

Very early, I arose, distressed. This was Sunday morning. Not to disturb Virginia, I fully closed the bathroom door after me and drew the water as quietly as possible. I felt that if I had a cold plunge, I might return to bed refreshed, and rest until breakfast. Oh, *my dear!* I had just stepped into the tub when my eyes were attracted to a *movement* among the towels on the rack. Petrified, I watched, and—*there was the snake!*

Oh, Alecia! I can scarcely tell you, with accuracy, what I felt. I seemed turned to stone. I just watched while the awful creature seemed to uncoil into a dozen yards and heaved itself up in a big S, like the pictures of boa constrictors in my geography long ago. Moreover, I saw its eyes *look* at me. You will never know horror, Alecia, until you have a snake fix on you an intelligent glance full of *intention*.

I don't know how I got out of the tub and leaped into the bedroom, but I did, and had enough forethought to shut the door after me. By this time I was moaning and chattering, but in a subdued way, as I did not want to rouse the house so early on Sunday. Virginia awakened, leaped up, and saw me. I felt her look of disapprobation even through my terror.

"Aunt Sue! Put *on* something!" she cried.

Then, and then only—I was hysterical, Alecia, and not to be judged—I

realized that I was absolutely *au naturel*, except that I grasped in my right hand a huge sponge, which I was waving madly.

Virginia pulled me into bed and heaped the clothes on me. Then I told her.

"Aren't you dreaming?" she asked. "The snake wasn't in there when we sponged, before going to bed!"

"It's there—now!" I faltered. "What's to be done?"

Virginia looked very calm and tall in her long nightgown and with her hair hanging in a plait.

"Now, get over it, Aunt Sue," she said soothingly. "I'll pull it off and put it back in the box."

"Aren't you afraid?" I shivered.

"Afraid of Daisy?" asked Virginia, smiling cozily. "Oh, no—she's as mild as a lamb."

But I couldn't let her enter alone. Wrapped in a sheet, I followed. She opened the door, I peeping over her shoulder. There the snake was, still on the towel rack, but hanging limp now, like a long piece of mildewed rope.

"Snatch—while it's relaxed!" I urged. "Oh, do you think you'll have the nerve to do it?"

"Why, of course." She advanced, I close behind her. "It's only Daisy—nice, little Daisy!" Virginia gurgled, as if to a canary.

If the creature had only stayed *hanging*, Alecia, all might have been well. But it didn't. It reared into a wiry, quivering S again, and *looked* at Virginia as it had looked at me. She went to pieces, giving little shrieks like barks. I had to pull her out as if she had been a bolster.

Later, when I assured her that the snake was still in the bathroom, the door securely closed, we pondered on what to do. Some one must get Daisy off the towel rack. But who? We were still huddling in bed, still unbathed and uncombed—for we keep all the toilet things in the bathroom—when Jiggins entered. She had her hand on the knob of the door, going in to prepare our tubs, when I decided it would perhaps

be wiser to tell her just what was awaiting her, as in that case she might be brave enough to clutch Daisy quickly and carry her to the box.

So I mentioned her presence briefly, and said we counted on Jiggins to remove her. What was the result? My dear, she faced us, going slowly plum color, fell in a dead faint, and we had *her* on our hands until Mrs. Crush's maid brought up breakfast.

This maid is a red-haired Irish girl, named Moyna, very stolid and strong. Virginia was against my asking her help, saying that all Irish were so afraid of snakes St. Patrick had had to clear Ireland of them. But I was determined to leave no stone unturned, and I was as soothing as possible.

"Moyna," I said quite casually, "Jiggins is not feeling well, so will you, like a good girl, just step into the bathroom and take off the snake that you'll find on the towel rack?"

Moyna slowly laid down the platter of bacon and eggs. Her mouth slowly opened. She put her hands slowly on her hips and studied me.

"Will I—*phwat*?" she asked, and stuck her head forward.

"Didn't you hear me?" I asked impatiently.

"Phwat was it, ma'am, you said was on the towel rack?"

"A snake." I said this airily, as if speaking of a slice of toast.

Moyna lifted her skirts. Without one word in reply, she went from the room, howling. *Howling*, Alecia. I use the word without any exaggeration. I will refrain from giving her exact words, but if some one had been *butchering* her, she could not have made a more awful noise, nor called more hoarsely nor more insistently upon the Deity! And I thought the lower classes had no nerves!

Of course her clamor roused the house. A young English doctor who, with his wife, had rooms just above us, was the first to come. At sight of him we felt that succor was at hand. The thought occurred to me that, as doctors can dissect people, and do things of that sort, they must be used to terrifying oc-



"Oh," whispered Virginia, "I could just—hug you!"

currences. This made me feel sure he would be able to deal successfully with what the bathroom contained.

We were both telling him all about it—by this time I had on a wrapper, of course—and he had nodded cheerily, when his wife appeared in the open doorway. Now this doctor is one of those small, blond, *pretty* men—and his wife is tall and very strong-featured. She is also very much in love with him and very jealous. Unfortunately for our hopes, Virginia, looking very sweet in a pink silk peignoir, had impulsively tucked her arm into the doctor's to pull him toward the bathroom.

The wife entered and tore them apart.

"Why is this *person* seizing you?"

she asked of him. Her voice is contralto.

"There's a snake—" he began.

"Go upstairs!" said the wife.

"But that snake—"

"John! Don't you *hear* me? Go—upstairs—at—once!"

He went. She followed. She looked back at us as if we were lepers and banged the door.

Alecia, I was never so insulted in my life. I sank on the sofa and cried like a child. Virginia cried, too. She was very remorseful.

"I shall always loathe zoölogy!" she sobbed.

"I should think so," was my hopeless reply.

We didn't even have the comfort of

a decent breakfast. By the time we thought of eating, the bacon and eggs were cold and stuck fast in grease. Nothing would induce Moyna to enter the room with our tea and marmalade. Not till my fingers were sore from pushing the bell did Mrs. Crush appear with the edibles. She was really impertinent; said she would never take Americans again and flounced out.

Oh, what a day! We sat there in shivering negligee—every hairpin, even, was on the stand in the bathroom—until about six o'clock, when, after sitting quietly for a long time, Virginia made an announcement.

"Aunt Sue, there's one man who will tear Daisy from her perch, and who won't mind the trouble. I'll ring up Captain Falconer. *He'll* make everything right—you'll see!"

She told me that all the time she was telephoning in the hall, she was conscious that a dozen people were eying her over the banisters. In fact, Alecia, *we* seemed to have gone into the wild-animal class with the snake!

Captain Falconer came, on his way to a tea, and beautifully dressed. He *was* so cheerful that my heart grew light! He said he would not be afraid of twenty Daisies. I could also see that he really *felt* for me, for I was plainly exhausted. All the time Virginia watched him with a tender, contented look.

Well, he went into the bathroom, Virginia and I peeping around him. There was no snake on the towel rack, nor could we see the creature anywhere. But Captain Falconer's search was thorough. He dove down into the corner *behind* the bathtub, and, with his legs fairly up in the air, squirmed around there, headfirst.

"I've got it!" he announced at last, and began struggling up.

Yes, the nasty, wriggling beast was firmly gripped in his right hand. He stood in his smart, gray afternoon clothes, laughing like a boy—but—oh, Alecia, our last humiliation came then! All of his beautiful hair was tufted with lumps of dry dust like purple fuzz, and his nose had a bunch of threads and

feathers sticking to it. *Dirt in unexpected corners*—and considering that we pay here ninety dollars a week!

But Captain Falconer didn't seem to mind.

"Oh," whispered Virginia, before I could discountenance such an exclamation, "I could just—hug you!"

"Do!" he cried. Then he looked like a defiant, naughty boy. "In fact, I won't budge until you do!"

Alecia—she—*did!* To my further horror, Captain Falconer continued to hold her with his free arm.

"We might as well finish this now, Virginia," he said. "Don't think it's intimidation, but, *before* I put back Daisy, tell me—have I a chance with you?"

"Haven't I hugged you, Gerald?—and with Aunt Sue as witness?"

There's the whole story! All finished in a moment. With their arms about each other, Daisy was carried to her box and safely housed. Captain Falconer, after washing, departed. He sent me in a delicious dinner from the Berkeley, but he took Virginia out. I saw no one that night—*nor for days.*

Virginia did not, after all, give back the reptile to the Zoo. She was about to leave with it on Monday morning, accompanied by Captain Falconer, when Jiggins *humbly requested it as a gift!* In answer to our astonishment, she explained that she did not want the snake for herself, but for her husband, to frighten him with if he began drinking again; she said she would get a neighbor's boy to wriggle it at him and he would believe he was *imagining it!*

Virginia gave her the box with this characteristic remark:

"Fate works mysteriously. I thought Daisy's place in the world of men would be merely an idle, passive one. Instead, she is to be a reformer of drunkards! Success to her in her noble work!"

Captain Falconer tied a blue ribbon on it! He also, by the way, put a stone—deep sapphire—on Virginia's fourth finger, left hand. Certainly our amazing week-end had a conclusive climax!

SUE.



The Better Baby

By Edwin L. Sabin

Author of "The Success Line," "Flower of Adversity," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

THE baby crowed; not, of course, like a rooster—save the mark!—but like a baby. The mother of the baby was pleased to hear the crow, and also to hear, as if in response, the step of the father upon the porch. She loved them both.

Enter the father, Mortman Alcott, junior, sometimes called Mort—as at present—sometimes Al; the "Al" having been rather his prenuptial title among the "boys."

This story might properly have started off in the good orthodox fashion: "When Berenice Holly married Mortman Alcott, everybody said—" And so they did. They said he was a lucky man, and that she was a fortunate girl. He had means, a profession, social standing, family backing, and no doubt would steady down, after marriage, to be as good as husbands go.

There was nothing particularly vicious about Mortman Alcott. No. Oh, yes, he drank a little, on occasion; and he had sown an average crop of the wild oats incident to a young-man career. But a wife would change him. And so had Berenice thought.

Mortman was the first real love that had entered her questing heart. No other man ever had stirred her woman love into being. Consequently, to her he was almost a god; like the gods of old, a deity with human attributes and frailties, but yet touched thereby only

transiently. She accepted him fully. She had faith that what he would do would be right, and her chief query was not whether he would make her happy, but whether she could make him happy.

She knew that he drank—a little—and disdained not the superior, unfathomable enjoyments of other young men about town. This was to be expected, before marriage; after marriage, she would be in his life, and his bachelor pursuits would pall on him. This he himself volunteered, repeating the tale of how he loved her, how he longed for her, and how he would try to be worthy of her.

So she gave herself to him as unhesitatingly as she had gloried in his love for her.

The honeymoon was unclouded. Her husband was so strong, so tender, and so masterful. She had been married two months before any of his human weaknesses developed in her god. One night—or rather, early one morning—he did come home somewhat the worse for wear. She forgave him. He was extremely sorry that he had kept her waiting and worried, and that he had fallen from grace. He explained that it had been forced upon him; a business matter had inveigled, and he had, he admitted, made a fool of himself.

So, to ease his perturbed mind, she tried to turn it into a joke.

But all too soon, as the newness of the wedded unity wore off, Berenice had moments when, alone in the day or awake in the night, she felt vaguely perplexed and troubled. She even at times wildly fluttered against what to her seemed a bondage; and later, she reproached herself.

But Mortman, her Mortman, after

women or women for men or women for women. When the baby came, it would be the adjuster of ideas, like a mechanical device that smooths the running of an engine.

The arrival of baby opened a second honeymoon. He was such a dear, remarkable baby, and linked her and Mortman anew with mutual pride and



"Well, how's the prince?" queried husband and father.

all, was of the earth, earthy; and she, on the other hand, had been so fanciful, so pure in thought and deed. Evidently men were vastly different from women, and he was no worse than his brothers; but must it be that the contact should drag her down rather than lift him up?

Her mother, reading her inner mind, told her not to be distressed; these moments of misgiving and doubt and disagreeable surprise were one portion of wifehood. The standard of men for men was not the standard of men for

love. There could be no question as to his perfection; the old family doctor who had ushered Mortman into the world pronounced enthusiastically upon this Mortman the Third, and the grandparents on both sides agreed with the doctor and among themselves.

Now the baby was almost one year old.

This brings us back to the crow, and the fond mother, and the step of the father upon the threshold.

Mortman was naturally high-colored

and assertive; this evening those characteristics seemed slightly exaggerated. But his embrace of his wife was genuine, and so was his hearty greeting to his scion on the pillows. Berenice found herself mentally hovering over both of them; for was she not the mother?

"Well, how's the prince?" queried husband and father.

"Mortman"—she could refrain no longer—"do you think he would take the prize?"

"Do I! Well, I should distinctly say he would! He could give another baby a mile and build a fire on the way and then beat him!" readily assured her

husband, poking the youthful topic in the ribs. "What prize?"

"At the baby contest. Haven't you heard about the baby contest?"

"Church, lodge, or fair?"

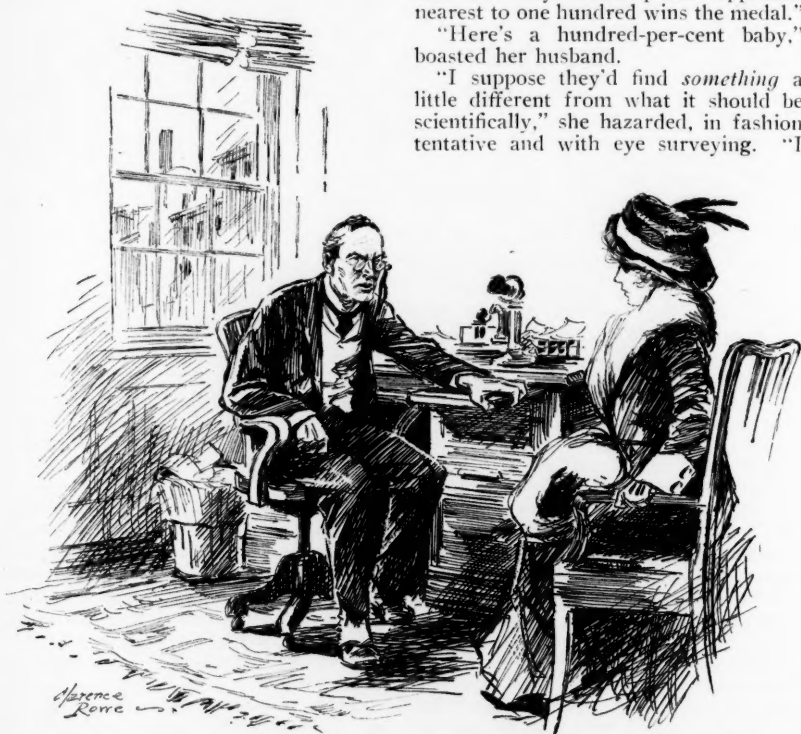
"Oh, Mortman! I wouldn't put our darling baby on common exhibition. This is a scientific contest. Didn't you see about it in the morning paper?"

"Haven't read the paper yet. Haven't had time." His voice was somewhat too ready, his color too high. "What about it?"

"It's a 'better-baby' contest. Not an exhibition exactly, but a judging contest, by scientific methods, for physique and all that. A board of doctors do the measuring and weighing, and the baby whose points approach nearest to one hundred wins the medal."

"Here's a hundred-per-cent baby," boasted her husband.

"I suppose they'd find *something* a little different from what it should be scientifically," she hazarded, in fashion tentative and with eye surveying. "I



"Tell him! For God's sake, tell him! And if you won't tell him, send him to me. I'll tell him!" thundered the doctor.

never heard of any human being who was absolutely perfect, inside and outside."

"Even the Venus de Milo was short an arm or two, wasn't she?" blithely argued her husband. "But the prince here is one hundred plus. He's got points to spare. Look at him, will you? Look at that head, and that muscle, and that chest!"

"He is wonderful, isn't he, dear!" she enthused as usual. "We shan't be a bit afraid to enter him. He'll get some prize, I know."

"Some prize? First prize or none, by Jiminy!" declared her husband, accepting no compromise. "*There's a baby*, with blood and breeding back of him. What's the entrance fee?"

"I don't think there'll be any. It's a sort of educative movement, dear, so that parents and the public generally will know more what children ought to be. I suppose," she added, reasoning, "that all babies are perfect, to their mothers and fathers; but some of them have weak places, comparatively, which should be studied even though they can't be remedied until other generations. I don't see anything weak in our baby, though; do you?"

"Not for a minute!" declaimed her husband, swinging the lusty youngster by the arms and next by the heels—an exercise at which Berenice always strongly protested more than the baby himself. "He's a corker—can qualify this instant for anything from prize fighter down. Blood tells."

The "better-baby" contest commenced uncertainly, but onward rolled, gathering volume, until it possessed the town. Therefore, being a free contest, a friendly contest, and moreover a contest that was of value to every entrant and in which nobody could lose, it occupied more time than had been anticipated. The examining board was extremely careful; no baby was slighted.

Mortman the Third had cast a glamour over the minds not only of his parents and other kin, but of an outside circle, also. Disinterested opinion assigned to him virtually a walk-

away. He had many stanch followers, had Master Mortman; and even other fathers and mothers granted that he was a remarkable child—which, you will concede, is a liberal admission.

Judgment had been rendered; and Berenice sat in her bedroom with the card in her hand. She only, and the judges, knew. It was right that the brunt of the contest should have devolved upon the mothers. The fathers—or most of them—had other occupation. The women who bore the children must be the public sponsors of them, with only now and then the man attending half anxiously, half shamedly, in the background.

As for Mortman, her husband, the baby contest was merely one of several avocations, and spasmodic at that.

When Berenice had received the judges' markings, so neatly and scientifically figured upon the official score card, she had glanced at them swiftly, and, coloring, hurried away. Some of the women had compared cards, laughing, even jesting, as they inspected one another's items. This Berenice could not do. It would have seemed to her almost like exposing her body—for of her little Mortman was a part. She granted that he had not won the first prize, or the second. This was announcement enough, to the curious.

She had wished to get away and to study the score card by herself, to analyze it. In her bosom had burned hot resentment against the judges. They were not human; they were machines. How could anybody of sentient attributes resist the complete appeal of that lovely child, laid round and sturdy and glowing before them, in perfection of flesh and form? Why, even a Moloch could not have been unfriendly toward it. Did she not *know* her child—hers and his, but more than his, hers; did she not know every inch of it, and had she not watched it grow cell by cell? What was scientific weight and measure beside the trained estimate of mother arms and mother eye?

Eliminate one especial item upon the card, and the average of little Mort-

man was very high. Without that item, he might have taken the first prize—as he ought anyway. The item puzzled her; it was such a drop. She could not understand, and she was certain that it was an error of recording. On sudden impulse she sprang up, and, taking the card, she sought further information. Mortman, husband, would be furious at the inconsistent report unless she had explanation, or promise of a wrong righted, to proffer him.

She found Doctor Irvin, one of the judges, back again at his office, and fortunately he was temporarily disengaged.

"Doctor, I wanted to ask you——" she panted, suddenly breathless from her dismay; and, asking, she handed him the score card. "That one item especially I don't understand. Mightn't there have been a mistake—a wrong entry, don't you think?"

However, there had been no mistake—by the judges. Doctor Irvin remembered the item very well. He had known Berenice long; and now he could explain to her patiently and fully and kindly, which he did. Being a mother of sense and poise, she made an attentive listener.

"But it can be rectified," the doctor concluded—and he placed his hand upon hers which trembled, cold. "It can be rectified, now that it will be taken in time. The only pity is that it ever should have existed, in such a child."

"I suppose—I had better tell him? Tell Mortman?" she queried, debating, dark-eyed.

"Tell him. For God's sake, tell him! And if you won't tell him, send him to me. I'll tell him," thundered the doctor.

"No," she mused slowly, winking soberly. "I'll tell him."

Mortman came home buoyant. She was ready, yet still she shrank. She tried to receive him naturally; she did not need to try to receive him lovingly, for she loved him with a love too deep to be deflected by any single occurrence.

"Hello! How's the contest?" he greeted cheerily.

"It's finished."

"Well, what's the matter? Who's second? Or isn't there any second? The prince wins in a walk, doesn't he?"

"No," she answered evenly. "Here's the score card, Mortman. You can see the average. Something pulled us down."

He scanned the card. He flushed angrily.

"It's all right; why, it's great, except this one thing. What is that, anyhow? What's the meaning of it, I'd like to know. What did they give you that kind of a deal for?"

"It's no kind of a deal, Mort," she soothed. "I felt as you do, when I first read the card, and I went straight to Doctor Irvin. He was one of the judges. He talked to me plainly. He said that I could tell you, or he would tell you, but that he told you must."

"Certainly. Go ahead," ordered her husband. "I don't care who tells me; but what is it?" He gulped, fighting his temper. "Somebody bribed that committee. We'll have a rehearing, by Jove! That boy deserves the prize, and I know it."

She smiled wistfully; and she flushed also.

"Yes, he deserved it," she said. "Poor baby! Oh, Mortman, you ought to have seen him at the examination! I was so proud of him, and so sure of him. Sit down, dear. I'm going to tell you. Please listen." And she repeated Doctor Irvin's concise diagnosis, and the opinions that had accompanied it. She spoke steadily, glossing not and blaming not, to the end.

Her husband burst forth furiously:

"Do you mean to say that I—I—I am held responsible for this one condition? And that if it hadn't been for me, for some alleged shortcoming on my—the father's—part, the boy would have won the prize? It's absurd! It's unjust! Why am I to blame any more than you? You're the mother. That doctor's a fool. He's going to apologize to you, and to me, or there'll be trouble. I shall insist on a reëxamina-



"And you agree, do you, that the responsibility is on me? That I ruined the boy's chances?"

tion by a competent committee. I shall, by Jove! We'll see whether an Alcott, a child of ours, is to be knocked out because of a small technicality!"

"Mortmān!" she besought. "Don't!" He was pacing up and down. "Listen. You must." She felt a great courage. "The malformation is there. Now I can understand for myself. But it can be remedied, I told you. Doctor Irvin is positive. Let's be glad that it is taken in time. A few years later, and it would have been much more serious. We mustn't be angry at the doctor or at the committee. It seems to me we ought to thank them."

"And you agree, do you, that the responsibility is on me? That I ruined the boy's chances?"

She answered firmly. Her eyes were unfaltering, her face glowing.

"I do, Mort. I'm not blaming you, dear. I love you too much to blame you. But the doctor has such absolute proof, in parallel cases, that I can't

doubt him. He'll show you his proofs. And I know what I was when I married you, and before I married you—dear. I had nothing to change, or to conceal. You—you didn't have *much*, dear; no more, I suppose, than most men. Only, you know what your habits had been, and what they have been, once in a while, since you've had me. As it happens, they've come home in a little warning. We mustn't mind losing the prize; that's nothing. I think we've been let off very easily, dear. Things might have been much worse. The baby, you see, can be made perfect, after all; and next time maybe he will win the prize."

Her husband had paused in his nervous, high-strung pacing, and was staring upon her, a horror paling his set face.

"Things might have been worse!" he repeated numbly. "My God! Yes, I see; I do see! The sins of the fathers— And I never thought, Bee; I never thought! Young men don't—

and young women don't, either, as a rule. We want our children to have every advantage; we'll feed them and clothe them and educate them and train them, but we'll start them off with a handicap. Mort, here, hasn't had a square deal."

"Oh, I'm sure the committee acted fairly, dear," she pleaded.

"I don't mean the committee. I mean from me; from me, or from somebody back of me. We sent him into the race hobbled. The boy—the brave little boy! That hurts." And Mortman shook his clenched fist with a gesture desperate and impotent. "Don't wait dinner for me, Bee. I've got to go out and fight this through with myself. I'll be back."

Before she could rise to stop him he was gone, bare-headed, into the dusk.

She did wait dinner for him; of course, she did. When, in about an hour—he must have walked fast and far—he came striding home, she received him simply, pressing to his side with gentle murmur and encouraging, questioning smile.

He held her tighter; his face had cleared. He was a new Mortman.

"It's all right," he said quickly. "That is, if you're sure the boy can be fixed up."

"He can, and then he'll be perfect," she answered.

"As he had the title to be, in the beginning, and as you had the innocent anticipation that he would be. But I've

been let off easily. The man usually is. Well, dear"—his voice assumed a graver and tenderer tone—"I can't live over again. But I can live on a new tack, for the sake of the boy's brothers and sisters, and for your sake."

In his embrace she shivered rapturously.

"There never can be really a better baby, Mortman," she defended. "He's an angel, as he is. If only you could have seen him at the examination!"

Together they strolled through and inspected him in his bed.

"Better baby, and soon-to-be-best baby," spoke the man, "behold a better and to-be-best father, who apologizes for having tried to cripple you. He was ignorant, and his is the humiliation."

"Mortman!" silenced the woman, pained.

Mortman III, appearing anything but disabled, thrust up a dimpled, pardoning hand, and, smiling, gurgled sleepily.

His father murmured, as if relieved:

"To think he forgives me!"

"He'll never know," comforted the woman.

The man, her husband, answered promptly:

"Yes, he will; for some day I shall tell him. He must not repeat my crime, Bee."

For a moment more they stood, arm about waist, beside the little bed. The woman sighed happily, and stirred.

"Dinner's ready," she reminded.

I Love My Love

I LOVE my love, for she is like a garden in the dawn,
Pale yet pink-flushed, with softly waking eyes,
And primrose hair that brightens to gold skies,
And petaled lips for dew to linger on.

I love my love, for she is like the mirror of the moon
(A sweet, small moon but newly come to birth)
So full of heav'n is she, so close to earth,
So versed in holy spell and magic rune.

I love my love. Oh, words that be too feeble and too few!
I love my love! As April on the hill
Creates fresh splendor with each daffodil,
So she within my heart makes life anew.

ISABEL ECCLESTONE MACKAY.

Here Come *The* Heirs

by
**Holman
F.
Day**



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

THE spring winds were chill, and there were wisps of snowdrifts under the lilac bushes and in corners where the sun's rays could not reach; they were merely dirty rags that fleeing winter had left behind him.

Cap'n Aaron Sproul paced to and fro with a quarter-deck stride in the lee of Aunt Sabrina Holt's cottage; the sun shone on that side, and the winds did not nip so smartly. His hands were behind his back, his collar was buttoned close, and his hat was well pulled down. He was alone, though many teams were hitched by the roadside and in the yard.

Spring in that bleak season between the snow and the green always oppressed Cap'n Sproul. The village seemed stripped, untidy, and unkempt. In the summer the foliage masked and helped out in the case of houses that needed paint. Winter strewed snow over rubbish and ruts and refuse. But in the spring the cap'n's eyes, trained to mariner's neatness on shipboard, found much to depress and offend him. The brown stalks in Aunt Sabrina's winter-withered flower garden made mournful harps for the fingers of the sharp wind. Cap'n Sproul was not especially senti-

mental or imaginative, but the sigh of the wind through those dead, brown stalks seemed to breathe a plaintive little elegy.

Dangling from the old-fashioned latch of the front door of the cottage was a bunch of "everlasting" flowers tied with a bow of crumpled black ribbon. It told mutely that death was within that house.

The cap'n glanced, on the turns of his solemn patrol, from brown stalks to withered bouquet and could not recollect that he had ever been in a more somber mood in all his life before.

A cadaverous individual who wore a dangly frock coat and squeaky shoes came tiptoeing to the front door and peered out at the cap'n. It was the village undertaker. He raised a forefinger and beckoned.

"Well, what now?" growled the cap'n.

"It's the wish of the fambly that you set with them," whispered the undertaker.

"I'll have to be excused. Shan't come in."

"But under the circumstances—considering what you've agreed to do—it's their wish."

"I'll do what I've agreed to do—seeing that I've got pulled into it—but it ain't got nothing to do with this funeral. That's final—I won't come in. Put down that finger."

The undertaker looked aggrieved, shut the door softly, and squeaked away

down the hall. The cap'n resumed his patrol.

A faded old hearse, with yellow panels in its sides instead of glass, creaked down the muddy road and pulled up in front of the cottage. The driver blanketed his horses, and walked over and gave the cap'n a "good day" in a hoarse whisper. The drone of a singsong voice sounded inside the house.

"Services just begun?" inquired the driver, keeping to his whisper.

The cap'n grunted and kept on walking.

"Report true that the heirs have left it out to you to referee and divide property?"

Grunt.

The man caught step with the cap'n, not minding the latter's side thrust of a scowl.

"Always knowed you had a lot of courage, Cap'n Sproul, but I thought you had judgment to go along with it," averred the driver with a titter. "Couldn't catch me in a mess like that with that fambly of nephies and nieces. I'd rather continuer to ride on the *outside* of that veehicle of mine."

Grunt.

"Don't see why the old biddy didn't leave a will. She had plenty of time to make one—seeing that she didn't die till she was over eighty. P'raps she hated 'em all so bad that she left it this way on purpose, hoping they'd claw themselves to pieces settling the estate."

"Look-a-here, I don't wonder you whisper—slurring the dead within biscuit toss of the coffin! The poor old critter died setting in her armchair with a cupful of parched corn in her hand. You ought to know that, seeing that you're the worst gossip in the town."

"Oh, I know she died sudden. But she could have made a will just the same. She wouldn't have died any sooner if she had done it and saved a fuss. As it is, I don't see where the Rundlett girl gets off after all her slaving and waiting and tending on the old lady."

A man slid out of the L door and came across and joined the two. The

beleaguered cap'n gave over marching to and fro. The new arrival had a toothpick stuck immovably between two of his front teeth and "sipped" his lips over it as he talked.

"I can't stay stived up for any length of time with so many people as is in there," he reported; "not even if deceased *is* my aunt. And that elder has started in as if he intended to talk all the afternoon. He needn't think he's going to get more'n two dollars out of us heirs for the job. Seems to me an elder ought to do funeral work free gratis."

"Have to pay for most everything these days," asserted the hearse driver. "And, seeing that all expenses is coming out of the estate, you hadn't ought to groan."

"Don't know how much estate there is yet." Sip-sip! "All of us heirs has been hunting three days—kept it up till the elder begun to pray just now—and we can't find hide nor hair of a bank book. She ain't never took any of us nephies and nieces into her confidence a mite."

"She might have done so if any of you had ever showed any interest in her while she was alive," stated the cap'n. "Near's I can find out, none of you ever darkened her doors after you 'all decided that she wouldn't pick out any special one of you to make an heir of."

"Well, it ain't human nature, is it, to kotow to anybody who don't turn around and reciprocate?"

"Maybe it ain't human nature—but you might let human kindness operate once in a while."

"I wish you wouldn't pick me out to hand slurs to, Cap'n Sproul. I've been the principal one in the fambly to crack you up as the right man to referee the division of the furniture and et cetries."

"You needn't think you're going to curry favor with me by mentioning that—considering the kind of a job I've got," snorted the cap'n. "The only reason why I ever undertook such a cussed performance was because I've maybe got gumption and influence

enough to fetch it through without a riot disgracing this town."

"That ain't a very kind way to refer to the nephies and nieces that make up the Holt heirs."

"You might as well have fair warning of the spirit in which I'm going into this thing. You had to shanghai me. Now that I'm in, I propose to run it—expressing my personal opinions as I do so."

"If it hurts your feelings as bad as all this, it ain't too late to make a change," said the heir, bristling.

"Make one! I'll be glad to get shet of the job," declared the cap'n with spirit. "I'm only sticking because when I've once give my word, I hate to break it." He resumed his patrol.

"He can be about as pernickety as anybody I ever see," confided the heir to the driver. "Some days he's all right. When I voted for him as referee, I was hoping we'd catch him on one of those days."

"Judging from the way he just yapped at *you*, you won't get much out of the division," suggested the driver.

"Oh, he's just as mad with all the rest of the heirs. He's mad mostly, I guess, because we all insisted on having the division made just as soon as we can get back from the grave."

"What's the particular hurry?"

"No need of making an extry trip here another day—some of us have to drive ten or fifteen miles—and it ain't no fun now in mud time. Furthermore, where there's a lot of equal heirs, it ain't safe to leave stuff overnight to be picked over and stole from. I've been an heir times enough to know that a fellow has got to grab quick and not be bashful in all cases where there ain't no will. Practice makes perfect," explained the nephew, sucking gustfully on his toothpick.

"What are you heirs going to do for the Rundlett girl?"

"Nothing, of course."

The driver scrubbed his mitten beside his nose, and his expression hinted that he did not approve that sentiment very heartily.

The heir understood the silent rebuke and scowled.

"She has waited and tended on your aunt, here, for five or six years, and I'm told she hain't drawed no wages to speak of—just seemed to do for the old lady out of liking."

"Hain't she had her living—roof over her head and vittles from the table? As you might say, it has come right out of the heirs—there's that much less left for us. Aunt Sabrina could have lived alone just as well as not. Didn't need to take in a girl to clothe and keep stuffed with grub."

Cap'n Sproul halted as he turned near them, and cocked up his ear.

"And she shows too much gall to have us take interest in her," continued the heir. "Just a few minutes ago she tried to jam into the parlor where the corpse is—right in among the regular moturners—the fambly!"

"Wouldn't you let that poor girl go in and set beside the coffin of the woman who had done so much for her?" demanded the cap'n.

"Parlor reserved for the fambly during services—that's right and regular. Girl's place was with the kitchen mourners. She's only an outsider," insisted the heir.

"Look here, that gander-shanked undertaker just came to the door and invited *me* into the parlor," declared the cap'n. "There's only one real mourner inside that house—that's the poor little Rundlett girl. And you say she ain't allowed to set side of her best friend whilst the last words are being said over that friend? Blast ye, ye're a set of turkey buzzards!"

"I speak for the fambly, and I won't stand no such talk."

"If it wasn't for getting the everlasting smirch of breaking up a funeral, I'd rip in there now and set that little girl where she belongs," stormed the cap'n. "It's respect for the dead that keeps me out—not any respect for them nephews and nieces."

He stamped away, continuing his promenade.

"I should hate to have him referee



Every now and then a little whimpering sob shook her slight form.

any of *my* business," observed the driver.

"I hate to have him referee *ours*, but there ain't another man in this town that the heirs will pay any attention to, or who couldn't be browbeat one way or the other," whined the nephew. "We've got to take him just as he is. Wonder if that old windbag of a minister is ever going to say 'Amen!'"

"When he does," observed the sarcastic cap'n, "them heirs will jump up like a trained dog who has been saying his prayers with a lump of cooky balanced on his nose. And their minds is on

mourning about as much as the dog's is on praying."

"I ain't got much respect for a man who will insult a whole fambly on a solemn occasion like this," stated the heir with acerbity.

But now a bustle within the cottage prevented any further interchange of incivilities. The creaking undertaker came and opened the front door and propped it with a huge conch shell that adorned the entrance hall.

"Do you care to view the remains before the fambly takes leave?" the heir asked the driver, pointedly ignoring the sullen cap'n.

"No; I'll be backing the hearse round to the door."

The heir went into the house, and the driver got busy with his horses.

"I yap out on too short notice," pondered the cap'n. "It's my failing—always has been. I can't seem to wean myself. But I'll be dornicked if I can keep still when some folks get to talking!"

Men and women came out—evidently the "kitchen mourners"—merely the neighborhood friends of the departed Aunt Sabrina. Stereotyped expressions of gravity masked their relief at getting out of doors again, and back to the routine of their lives.

Then, after a few minutes, came four men squeezing out through the narrow door, easing along a coffin. Their hats were ranged on the cover. They slid the coffin into the hearse, securing their hats as the headgear passed them.

Inside the house, the undertaker was dolorously reading aloud names from a slip of paper on which he had arranged

the precedence of the heirs. Mourners came forth and climbed into muddy wagons, and after a time the procession moved off.

When the last wagon had jolted out of the yard, Cap'n Sproul walked into the open door of the cottage.

He found the controversial heir fingering cracks in the wall paper and knocking his knuckles here and there. He followed the cap'n into the sitting room.

"See here, Holt," exploded the old mariner, "are you left behind here to follow me around for fear I'll steal something?"

"My horse is lame," was the nephew's surly reply.

"Huh! Afraid you'd get distanced in the hoss race back from the grave, eh? You keep on hunting for that will, Holt. Don't you chase me around these premises as if you thought I was a sneak thief."

"Cap'n Sproul, let's not do any more jawing between ourselves. I want to stand in well with you. I've always admired and respected you. If my aunt left a will, I know I'm the one that's favored. She always got along better with me than she did with the rest. I always paid interest when I borrowed money from her. Some of the rest of 'em tried to cheat her out of her interest—much as ever she could do to get the principal back. There are lots of things I could tell you to show that I'd be the favored one if she could have her say. Now ain't you going to consider me as entitled to a little extry in this division?"

The heir interpreted the cap'n's scowl properly and hastened on: "I don't mean anything that ain't all just and proper, cap'n. But there are a few little special things in this house that I know aunt would like me to have. She'd rest easier in her grave if I had 'em. Now, instead of dividing the silver that's always been her pride and joy, give it to me and I'll keep it together—as you might say, a memorial of Aunt Sabrina. Some of the other heirs might go peddling it. There's the tall clock—"

"Just one minute, Holt," warned the

cap'n. "I suppose you'd like to drag off something out of this hog wrassle, wouldn't you?"

"Well, what do you think I'm here for?"

"For just about ten more word: of the kind of talk you're giving me, I'll disinherit you, and take a vote of the other heirs to back me up. You can sort of guess how they'd vote."

The nephew did not follow the cap'n when the latter marched on into the kitchen.

Cap'n Sproul found two persons in the kitchen—a girl and a young fellow. They sat side by side in wooden chairs, and the young man was patting the girl's hand. Her eyes were red, her face was piteously sad, and every now and then a little whimpering sob shook her slight form and fluttered past her lips.

"I'm trying to comfort her up a little, Cap'n Sproul," explained the young fellow. "Them heirs has been using her mighty mean."

"Don't mind 'em more'n you can help, sissy," advised the cap'n. "Heirs are terrible critters when they flock around and stick their claws in. I've known folks pretty fairly decent till they got to be heirs and human nature went to busting out in 'em. Then they wasn't no better'n buzzards."

"They wouldn't let me in there to sit with them—beside her," quavered the girl. "They made me just an outsider—just as if I didn't love her so much. They wouldn't let me put my bouquet on the coffin."

At her feet lay a pathetic bunch of flowers—plainly cullings from window plants.

"I walked all over the village, begging at the houses for them," confessed the girl. "I didn't have any money to send away for flowers."

"Don't fuss over it, sissy. I reckon Aunt Sabrina knows all about how much you cared and what you done," said the cap'n, a catch in his voice. "Let's think of it that way—it's comforting to feel that way."

"Because I loved her the heirs are mad at me," sobbed the girl, opening



*"She has had vittles and clothes and pickings and stealings enough out
that a court will al-*



of this fambly," shouted the whiskered heir. "She ain't got no claim
low," blustered another.

her heart under this sympathy. "Excuse me for talking out to you—but I can't hold it in any longer. I couldn't help loving her. I never had any mother to know. I was bound out to an industrial school, and when I was twelve and could stand on a stool to do housework and wash dishes, they let me out, and I was kicked around from pillar to post. She took me in, and gave me a home, and I wasn't only a hired girl. She was just like a mammy and a granny, all in one.

"The heirs have been sneering at me because she gave me food and clothes. I didn't care for those things. I cared for what else she gave me. Nobody else ever gave me love and made me feel that I wasn't only like a stray cat to be kicked around. I got so I could lift my head up a little in the world and could forget that all the others before her had called me a brat and a nothing and a nobody. The heirs came here after she died and said I wanted her money and would like to steal her furniture. I don't want it—I don't want anything but her—but I can't ever have her any more. And now I'm back to just nothing again."

She began to weep with the abandon of a frightened child.

In those few moments, in that rush of half-incoherent words, she had told the whole story of one poor little life. At any rate, Cap'n Sproul, instinct quickened by his kindling sympathy, felt that he required no further details of biography in order to understand.

"Poor little sissy," he said, "don't take on! I reckon something can be done for you, even if Aunt Sabrina has gone on."

"Cap'n Sproul, she won't have to worry so long's I'm alive and can work," declared the youth. "I've been telling her not to mind."

"I can work, myself," sobbed the girl. "I'm glad to work. I always expect to work. But it's one thing to work for them that call you a brat, and another thing to be with a friend who helped you hold up your head in the world."

"P'raps we can be married in another

year," said the young man. "I'm working hard. I've got one raise this year. My pay is only six dollars a week now, but I ought to get two dollars a week more by next year, and we can live on that if we're prudent."

"Let's see, young man," investigated the cap'n. "Who may you be? I don't seem to place you."

"I'm Eddie Dowling, and I work in the dowel mill over to Puddledock. I know Amy, here, 'cause we was bound out to the same farmer once. We was both of us abused so there—me by the old man and she by the old woman—that we got interested in each other."

"Hardly the way to start love as the poets dream of it," stated the cap'n. "But still, you never can tell. Sissy, get calm and set your mind to work hard, now. She seemed to like you a terrible lot, you say—Aunt Sabrina did."

"Yes, sir," replied the girl, staring at him with some wonderment, for he had folded his arms and stood before her with a sort of judicial gravity.

"She must have said, some time or other, just like this: 'Sissy, when old Aunt Sabrina is gone, you'll find that she has remembered you for being so good to her.' Now, didn't she ever say something like that?"

The girl shook her head. "No, sir," she informed him.

"But didn't she ever say anything about paying you for what you did here?"

"Oh, she gave me a good home—that's all the pay I wanted."

"Didn't she ever say, 'Sissy, there'll be a paper left after I'm dead, and that paper will tell you how much Aunt Sabrina thought of you'?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know what a will is?"

"Why, it's a writing that gives money to folks."

"Exactly. Didn't she ever mention that she had made a will?"

"No, sir."

"Did she have any little private hiding place around the house where she sent you any time to carry something or to get something for her?"

"No, sir."

"Wasn't there any little box where she kept papers and things? Didn't you ever see her pawing over things in some drawer or something?"

"No, sir. The heirs have been asking me those kind of questions. That man that's in the sitting room, sir, swore at me when I told him just what I have told you. But I'm telling the truth, sir."

"She died terrible sudden, eh? Didn't have time to say a word to you before she dropped off?"

"I came back from the kitchen, here, and she was sitting straight up in her chair, her eyes open—and she was dead," said the girl, tears flooding her eyes again.

The cap'n wagged his head and growled his disgust.

"It's blasted queer how some old folks think they're going to live forever, or else think there's some way going to be provided so they can take their property with 'em. Thank God, I've come to a realizing sense that money can't do me any good after I'm dead except it was printed on asbestos paper—so I've made a will. It's too bad, sissy, it's as it is here. Looks like these heirs will get it all. Maybe she hated 'em so bad she left it to make 'em fight—relishing that idea so well that she couldn't make up her mind to give it to you. But what a home this would have made for you and bub here—how she could have started you out in life if she'd had a mind to it! Too bad—too bad! Now it's for heirs to dance a devil's fandango round!"

His attention was drawn to the window by a sound without. A rangy horse came larruping into the yard, kicking mud over the dasher of a surrey.

"First installment of mourning heirs has now come under the wire," stated the cap'n. "That race back from the grave must have developed considerable speed."

He trudged despondently into the sitting room, leaving the young folks sitting side by side in the wooden chairs.

He sat down in Aunt Sabrina's arm-chair, and waited in silence, drumming his fingers. Wagon after wagon came into the yard, drawn by hurrying horses, and after a time the heirs were assembled. The cap'n studied them in turn. Their eyes, roving gustfully from article to article in the room, mutually challenged each other. *This* glance insolently claimed the tall clock, *that* glance "spoke for" the ancient highboy in the corner.

At last one of the heirs cleared his throat with that sepulchral bellow called "a vestry cough."

"May as well get down to business," he suggested.

"I want to say to all present that I hain't got any hankering for this job, and am willing to quit here and now," stated the cap'n. "If I serve, I want you all to hold to that understanding that my word goes—and I shan't play any favorites. I shan't agree to give all of you the same thing; it can't be done. I've thought up an idea of how to work it."

He pulled a little packet of blank cards from his pocket and walked around the room distributing them, one to each heir.

"Each heir write his or her name on a card and hand it back to me. I'll drop all into my hat and mix 'em. Then we'll take the things in this room where we now sit. I'll say, 'Clock.' Then I'll dip in my hand and pull out a card. That heir gets the clock, and I'll drop the card back and mix 'em all again, and then continue."

"That seems to be a game of chance, and my religious sentiments is against any such games," declared a sour-faced spinster.

"What do you want to do—spit at a crack or run foot races to decide the thing?" blazed the cap'n. "There's no fairer way than what I have planned."

"As a referee, seems to me you ought to sit in judgment, hear arguments from heirs why this or that should be given to that or this——" began the heir who had remained behind on the job.

"Yes, and have a steady job for the



Mrs. Britt belabored the face of another woman with a hair switch that she had snatched from the victim's head.

rest of my life," broke in Cap'n Sproul. "I propose to have this thing over with quicker'n that."

Half a dozen heirs began to talk all at once, but the cap'n did not appear to be interested. Aunt Sabrina's little stand was close beside her armchair. The cap'n picked up her Bible and thumbed the leaves in indifferent fashion.

Suddenly he broke in upon the wrangle, and they checked their voices.

"Here's a little episode as set down by St. Mark that may give you a line

on this thing, ladies and gents. It says here—fifteenth chapter:

"And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take."

"What are we to understand by that?" demanded a whiskered heir with much heat.

"I'm sure I don't know," retorted the cap'n. "Depends on how you look at such things. I just happened to come onto it here and threw it in for what it's worth."

"I think it's an insult," affirmed the acidulous spinster.

"If you're so touchy that Holy Writ insults you, marm, you must have a guilty conscience," said the cap'n.

He went about the room again, holding out his hat. They dropped in their cards, most of them sullenly, but he did not appear to be amenable to argument, and they obeyed his commands.

"Now," he said, nursing the hat on his knee, "before casting lots—as the Bible has it—I want to say a word to you about this Amy Rundlett girl who has—"

"She isn't an heir—I don't believe in wasting time over anything except business strictly relating to the heirs," cried the man who had constituted himself chief spokesman.

"I think this *is* business relating to the heirs. She has nursed and tended and waited on your old aunt just for board and clothes—doing things for the old lady that none of the rest of you were generous enough to do—giving up time none of the rest of you would give up, and I want to ask you if you ain't going to do something for her."

"She has had vittles and clothes and pickings and stealings enough out of this fambly," shouted the whiskered heir.

"She ain't got no claim that a court will allow," blustered another.

"I don't say she has got any legal claim," put in the cap'n, holding down his temper for the sake of what he hoped to win by his diplomacy. "But I think that the Holt family, so as to stop the speech of the people, ought to do something for that poor girl. Maybe she'll be married in a year or so. Let her pick out enough furniture, before we start dividing, so that she can furnish up a little nest. It won't be missed

of you. You've all got

considers leave to pick and such style as that sets a for cases where heirs woman who had taken the tall clock and was on it as if she wished she had "tagged" it.

"Marm," demanded Cap'n Sproul, "is that the best excuse you've got for sending out into the world a poor girl without stiver or stick of possession in her hand—after that girl has stayed in here with one of your family for five or six years, making your aunt's last days happier?"

"The girl herself says she has been happy doing it."

"That's because the girl is generous. Now go ahead and match her in generosity just a little."

The woman jutted her head forward and peered at him viciously over her spectacles.

"Cap'n Sproul, you'd better show less interest in flirty young girls, and more interest in this job you're on."

The cap'n gasped—opened his mouth—and then closed it. He confined himself to a retort much milder than he had intended. All he said was: "Marm, I might have knowed better than to talk generosity to a woman who peeks over her specs so as to save wear and tear on the glass. Be all of you the same mind as her in this thing?" he asked, his surly gaze traveling the circle of their faces. He found no encouragement.

"Anybody who favors giving the little girl a present for what she has done please raise his or her hand," invited the cap'n.

There was no response.

"I put the question that way so as to save you any wear of clothing by lifting your arms," stated the cap'n. "I knew well enough you wouldn't move."

"I speak for the heirs when I say that we won't listen to no more sneers," cried the whiskered man.

"If you don't like the way I'm managing this, go get somebody else," advised the cap'n airily. "You need to have somebody stand up and tell you what you are. This is the time and the occasion for you to be told what you are. But you needn't worry—I ain't going to do it. I've said all I'm going to about the Rundlett girl. I can see I'm only wasting my breath saying any more to people who are so dog-goned mean that they wouldn't

even give a man three cheers for saving their lives. Sit down there!" He snapped imperious gesture at the Holt who had bristled up at him on other occasions that day. "Don't try to get into any jawing match with me. I've been a master mariner, and I know more cuss words than you do. You wouldn't last in front of me two seconds if I ever get started."

He tossed his hat from side to side, shaking up the cards.

"Clock!" he called, and then drew a card. He squinted at the writing thereon.

"Hadasah Holt draws it," he announced.

The woman who sat close to the ancient timepiece squealed shrilly in anger and put her arm about the case.

"You shan't have it! Aunt Sabrina told me once I should have this clock. I've always had my eye on it."

"This thing can't never be settled, drawing lots hit or miss like a pack of gamblers," objected another heir. "We won't none of us get what we want that way."

"Speaking for myself, I want that clock and I've got it," declared Hadasah Holt. "Take your clutches off it, Mis' Britt."

"Don't you see you ain't getting nowhere by that plan?" still another heir inquired of the cap'n. "I've got a claim on that clock, myself. I've mended it for aunt three times and only charged half price."

"The division has got to be conducted different, that's all," announced the gentleman of the prominent whiskers.

"You say how, then," snapped the cap'n.

"You're the one that's looked to to referee this thing—I ain't. We got you because we thought you knowed how. Hain't ye ever been anywhere to see an estate settled?"

"Yes, sir," acknowledged the cap'n. "And it was done the most successful I ever saw anything done. I'd like to see it made a model in all cases where there ain't no will and where heirs come in like they've come in here."

"Why ain't you doing it on that

model, then, instead of folly-doddling round with gambling schemes?"

A number of the heirs had risen to their feet, and were showing symptoms of executing a flank movement on the old clock.

"All of you set down and I'll explain that case," directed Cap'n Sproul. "It was done by the heathens and worked all right, and may be just the ticker for the Holt case."

"There you go on another slur," blustered the chief spokesman.

"No, I'm simply stating facts—it was done by the heathens! You all listen. It may be interesting. One time I took the *Jefferson P. Benn* into the Kongo for a cargo, and while she was loading, I made a trip up into the bush with a feller who knowed the ropes in them parts and could handle the heathens. We come to one village where the chief had died and they was having his funeral. Into the grave with him they put his bows and arrows, and all the strings of teeth he had collected, and a plug hat he had stole from a missionary, and a copper kittle that was the only one in the whole tribe and that made him a millionaire amongst the heathens. He had owned three dogs, and they killed them and put them into the grave, and then, having put in everything he had owned that was worth anything, they covered him up and killed off his two best-looking wives and buried them beside him. That settled the estate. No scrapping, not a yip of arguing, and claiming, and squabbling—all done up neat, nice, and in an A-one and ship-shape manner. Of course, they was only heathens, but they showed a whole lot of good manners in what they done, and the way they done it."

He leaned back in Aunt Sabrina's chair and returned their blistering gaze with much composure. The prolonged silence in the room, the whiskered heir arose, rigid with anger. He passion.

"I reckon I'm expressing sentiments of the H assembled, when I say as that will be allow

action being took. Am I right, fellow heirs?"

The indorsing mumble gave him plenty of courage. He banged his hard fists together.

"We have picked out a man who only took this job so that he could come here and make fun of us and spit out his spite against us. He has slurred us because we wouldn't hand over good proputtty to a designing little slut who has

of Mrs. Britt—she continued to hang to the clock.

"We'll now settle this thing amongst ourselves, Capting Aaron Sproul," sneered the whiskered gentleman.

"Very well, get out your tomahawks and pitch in," counseled the deposed referee. He showed no desire to depart immediately. He leaned back in the chair and clasped his hands over his waistcoat, and his face showed the ex-



He set himself between them, his sturdy arms about their waists, and began to propel them gently toward the sitting room.

come in here and sponged off our old aunt. He has sneered when we're only showing the right spirit of heirs. If proputtty is left, it has to be gone after. If I hadn't gone after proputtty and made my bigness amongst the heirs

I wouldn't have what I've got. And I can see by your faces that I'm now going to say what I mean and by every one present that any man refereeing amongst us slurs us, and wants to keep us out of his hands. All them who want to keep their hands."

up except the hands

pectancy of one who looked for lively scenes and did not want to miss any of the excitement.

Three others put hands on the clock and began to argue with each other and with Mrs. Britt. A man who was evidently Mr. Britt elbowed his way to the timepiece and announced that he proposed to carry the clock out to his wagon.

"We might as well settle right here and now whether any one man is going to have the whole say in regard to this proputtty—picking and choosing," shouted the whiskered individual, push-

It's a kind of a will that stands fire, ladies and gentlemen."

He put up his hand when a hubbub of voices began.

"Go make your talk in court, if you dare to go to court. But let me tell you that when you get on the witness stand and I cross-examine you as to what you did in this room to-day before the holy shadow of death passed away from it, you'll be exposed to the people of this county as heathens."

"That would be complimenting 'em," broke in Cap'n Sproul. "I've just been explaining to 'em how the heathens operate."

"As executor, I order this house cleared at once," commanded the lawyer. "You will receive your legacies after this will has been duly probated."

The cap'n could not refrain from one last remark.

"Them bungdown coppers will come in handy to cut your wisdom teeth on, ladies and gents."

He flirled a contemptuous gesture with stubby fingers in their angry faces and strode out into the kitchen.

The boy and girl were seated there side by side, talking in low tones. Their hands were clasped, and the girl was calm, smiling wistfully as her young lover whispered to her.

"Oh, things ain't so awful bad in this world when two folks love each other, Cap'n Sproul," affirmed the youth bravely. "We'll start out into the world, me and Amy, and we'll make good. I'll be earning my two dollars a day before I get much older."

"You two haven't heard much of what's been going on in yonder, hey?" inquired the cap'n.

"Only heard 'em fighting—and that's nothing to do with us, sir. All we've been thinking of is how much we love each other."

"You just keep up that thinking, bub."

He went to them, putting out his hands. When they gave him theirs, he pulled them up from the wooden chairs. He set himself between them, his sturdy arms about their waists, and began to propel them gently toward the sitting room. He saw that the heirs were out of doors, climbing into their wagons.

"Sissy," said the cap'n, a little quaver in his tones, "come along in here where Aunt Sabrina used to sit. She's asleep up on the hill with her poor old hands folded forever—but while I tell you something, in about a rainute more, I reckon her spirit will be sitting in her old chair, looking at her dear little girl with a smile."

"Sublime Sweet Evening Star"

SUNSET, by the night hard pressed,

Loses all its gilding now,
But a tint—the peacock's breast

Would not shame it—rims the brow
Of the hillock, rich in sheen;

And, as pure as angels are,
Looking from a heaven serene

On this earth—the evening star.

Later there shall flock a train

Grouped in splendor, bright of glow,

On the velvet sky more plain

Than at twilight she may show.

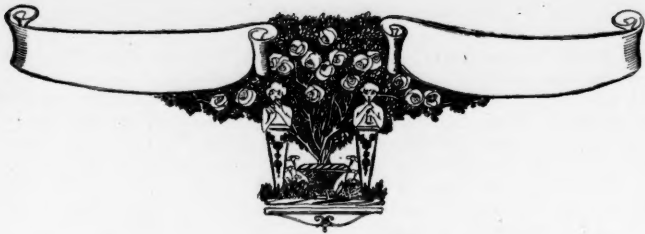
O my Sweet, our praise must be

Still of her brief reign, her own!

Midnight holds not such as she,

Limpid, precious—and alone!

—RHEEM DOUGLAS.



The Pearl and the Oyster

By Prudence Rawson

I AM glad that the vogue has somewhat passed for the story of the misunderstood young girl in the home of unsympathetic relatives, for, as I read, I'm always uncomfortably aware of an heretical sympathy for the relatives.

For which, of course, there is a reason.

My father's Cousin Grace lived in the same town in which we lived. She was a semi-invalid widow with one daughter, Irene. Cousin Grace had made a somewhat unfortunate marriage, and when her uncongenial and not too worthy husband died, she found herself with a far from adequate income.

My father helped her out by paying the rent of her flat, Irene's school bills, the wages of her servant, her bills for coal and gas, and her grocery bills.

Father never liked Cousin Grace, so he did all this purely from a sense of duty, and, though he made no outward complaint, I think he did it a bit grudgingly. Certainly it must have annoyed him considerably to find on her bills strawberries, tomatoes, pineapples, all out of season, when we were considering such luxuries as 'way beyond our means. Of course, he should have refused to provide these extravagances, but he found it easier to pay bills than to have scenes with his hysterical, weeping, invalid cousin.

When Cousin Grace died, as a matter of course, my parents brought Irene home to live with us. We children were delighted, and I believe even my parents were glad to have the little orphan. She was sixteen then, extremely pretty, with charming manners, and she was reserved and self-contained where poor Cousin Grace had been hysterical and sceney.

My kind-hearted mother did everything to make this sad change of home as easy as possible for Irene. She was put into our one guest room, though it was with the understanding that later she was to share the room of my younger sister, Maisie. And because my mother thought sleep was the best comforter, she not only allowed Irene to sleep past the breakfast hour in the morning, but she took hot milk up to the girl's room at bedtime so that she would not lie awake long.

Irene took these kind-hearted indulgences as the fixed order of things. She continued to come down for her breakfast after every one had finished. When my mother ceased taking the milk up at night, I think Irene was a little and asked the maid.

We were a household of only one servant, so my mother explained kindly, but firmly, that none of us could demand anything from the maid, and that she came down too late for

breakfast would have to cook her own meal and wash her own dishes.

Irene's manner immediately became a very refined, but haughtily reproachful air of martyrdom that made us all inwardly squirm. After that she usually came to breakfast on time, but when she was late, rather than cook anything for herself, she went without her meal, and, to my mother's anxiety, invariably had a headache by noon.

When my mother suggested that Irene might now move into the extra bed in Maisie's room so that we could have the room she was occupying free for guests, she dismissed the matter at once by saying that it was impossible for her to sleep in the same room with any one. So when guests came, they had to occupy my room while I shifted to Maisie's quarters.

My father, though he is one of the most generous men in the world, always saw to it that we by no means lived up to our income; there must always be a balance on hand ready for an emergency. Consequently we were not encouraged in any extravagances. Our clothes were well made and in good taste, but we never had more than we needed, and we made them last. Our hats usually lasted two seasons, and our suits invariably did, while our shoes were half-soled and worn again. Our shopping was done for the most part in the very satisfactory stores of our town, or by mail from city stores. Irene, however, always found it necessary to make a trip to Philadelphia to get anything fit to wear. This meant an additional expense of from ten to twelve dollars each time she did any shopping. Moreover, where we bought one hat and one pair of shoes at a time, Irene not infrequently purchased three hats and five pairs of shoes.

But all this, understand, was with her father. The little personal income she had, though it had been intended to meet all the living expenses of the family, was quite ample for her to dress beautifully for that purpose alone. My mother protested, but my father simply replied that it was her

own money she was spending. It was; but it was my father's money that went for her tuition and dentist bills and doctor bills.

Again, I think my parents should have refused to let her spend all her money for clothes while they met her other obligations. But Irene was not a child and could not be disciplined; and again, my father found it easier to pay bills than to endure her air of martyrdom.

It was the same way about the meals. Irene, accustomed to the dainties her invalid mother craved, found our plain, wholesome fare quite impossible. Instead of barley soup and beefsteak and roast potatoes, she desired sweetbreads and mushrooms and squab. While we waded happily and heartily through our good meals, she toyed with a bit of marmalade and toast, always to the anxiety of mother, who was sure the girl would fall ill from lack of nourishment. Irene, however, avoided that calamity by forming the habit of stopping at the little tea room downtown and providing herself with the delicacies that our table lacked.

All of which, I think, we might have forgotten by this time if it hadn't been for "Bumps." Bumps was the youngest of us, much the junior of either Maisie or me, only seven, in fact, when Irene first came. Although we privately considered him the dearest child that ever lived, he was, I suppose, a very average and ordinary boy. Irene was not used to children. Her delicate eyebrows had a way of contracting painfully at the sound of his war whoops through the house. She always ignored his questions and his attempts at conversation unless they became too persistent, and then she answered in monosyllables. Everything of his that she had occasion to pick up, whether it was his overcoat from off her favorite chair or his speller that had been dropped carelessly upon her sewing, she lifted gingerly between disdainful thumb and disdainful forefinger, her lips drawn back from her pretty teeth. She would never join in our games with Bumps. The hour between dinner and his bed-

time had always been considered his, and we spent it playing some game of his selection, Old Maid or Twenty Questions or Snap. She always declined to join these gay family parties and sat apart, reading, and frowning over her book when our fun grew too noisy.

Of course, on Bumps' account, we resented all this. Why shouldn't we? He was ours and this was his home. As the children say, he got there first. We were willing enough that he should get all that was due him in the way of punishment at school and pommelings from his playmates, but we drew the line at snubs in his own home. Bumps, with a child's quick intuition, felt her hostility, and became her sworn enemy. I am sure there were many spankings for rudeness to her that he deserved in those days and never received because of our sympathy for him. Poor Irene!

Whether the trouble was with her or with us, the fact remained that we could not assimilate her in our home. She neither added anything to it nor received anything from it. Even the exquisite piece of embroidery that she made herself and gave mother each Christmas only gave us a vague, uncomfortable feeling of being indebted to a stranger.

To her I think our home meant only a cheap and not very satisfactory boarding place. Indeed, we got most of our news about her from outsiders.

"Aren't you worried about Irene having so much pain in her back?" one acquaintance would exclaim.

Or another: "Wasn't it funny about Irene getting her suit case exchanged with that man's in Philadelphia?"

And that would be the first we would have heard of a back or a suit case.

I cannot think the fault was wholly ours, for we have since found ourselves able to assimilate more than one

new member into our household. There was a little English boy friend of Bumps whose parents were called suddenly back to England and who stayed with us a whole year. Even yet we claim him as ours. Then there was Aunt Jenny, a maiden aunt of mother's, who was with us for two years and who fitted in beautifully. And there are also three or four friends who come and go as freely, and are as welcome, as if it were their own home.

Nor can I think the fault was all with Irene. I haven't a doubt but that we jarred terribly upon her nerves. Now she is the very charming center of a household consisting of a husband, two children, and a mother-in-law, proving to all of us that given the right surroundings she can harmonize beautifully. My own husband, who did not know Irene at all in the days when she lived with us, has said more than once: "I don't see why you all have it in so for Irene."

It may even be that the whole trying situation helped make Irene into the charming creature that she is, just as the oyster, with the grain of sand or little parasite it can't assimilate, turns out a pearl. But I contend, nevertheless, that it's hard on the oyster and hard on the pearl, inexcusably hard. In looking back on it, I think it was an injustice all around, to her as well as to us, that she was allowed to remain the six years she spent with us. A year should have proved beyond a doubt that we couldn't assimilate her, and then she should have been placed somewhere where she did fit in and helped to independence.

I myself have learned that lesson well. I have a home and little family of my own now, and for the sake of every one, I am determined with my whole heart that that home shall not, oyster fashion, grow a pearl.





CONFESSORS

BY

EDWARD BOLTWOOD



Author of "The Quality of Brotherhood," "A Hit in the Ninth," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY N. W. TRUSLOW

JUSTUS ROOD sat in a rocking-chair beside the student lamp on his parlor table, waiting for Agnes to finish with the supper dishes in the kitchen. When his intent ears caught the gentle thud of the door of the china closet, he immediately took a telegram from his pocket, unfolded it, and laid it across the knee of his black trousers. The movement was very deliberate. Justus Rood, the veteran cashier of a village bank in Massachusetts, was a man of deliberation and routine; and he always knew exactly what he was going to do, and say, and think.

A tall and slender young woman, dressed severely in dark gray, entered the parlor. Agnes Bentley kept house for her uncle, who was a widower. She called him her uncle, although, being a cousin's daughter, the relationship was really less intimate.

Mr. Rood leaned forward and thrust the telegram into the circle of lamplight.

"He will be here to-night, my dear," said Justus, watching her handsome face.

With a little gasp, she drew backward into the shadow.

"To-night," repeated Rood. "It seems there was more time off for good behavior than we—than I reckoned. You'll fix up his old room, Agnes? People will know to-morrow that he's got

and that'll have a lot of over town. Here, read it." William sent it!

shadow remained silent. He refolded the yellow envelope with professional exactness,

"In the morning," he continued, "the people will see me and William walking to the bank together. Sunday, they'll see him in our pew. Next week, they'll see him running the coal office that my money's invested in. I guess then that what few folks are still talking slander will shut their mouths! I guess then that the whole town'll know that my boy was in that Western prison wrongfully, and that Justus Rood stands the same here in Olerville as he ever did! If you—if only you, William's promised wife—"

He broke off, eying her wistfully. Agnes did not speak. For a few seconds, the one sound in the room was that of the summer rain, falling gently on the lilac bushes outside a high French window, which stood open.

"I've been good to you, Agnes, ain't I?" resumed old Rood. "I've given you a home since you was an orphan girl. I've took care of the money your mother left you. You promised to marry William; your engagement was printed in the paper, before he went West. And William, he loves you yet, spite of your not sending him any word since—since that day."

The woman's pale face, as she moved into the glow of the lamp, became dimly visible. It was of a type seldom seen in New England, suggestive of the calm purity of some Italian madonna.

"Yes, you've been good to me," she said gravely. "It isn't that."

"What, then?"

"Oh, it's not like paying a debt at the bank, uncle! We've been over this so often! Can't you understand how I feel? Are you good to me when you



"Innocent, uncle! And he stabbed a man—tried to kill a man—in the gambling saloon of a mining camp! Innocent!"

ask me to take a husband who has worn prison stripes, who has breathed prison air, who has lived the prison life of a convict?"

"He is innocent, Agnes."

"He never said so," she retorted, steadying her hand, as if to repress a shudder, against the table. "Never said so, all during the trial."

"That was because of the lawyer that I hired for him," answered Rood patiently. "William's attorney didn't want him to testify. Maybe the lawyer was right. You can't tell how things will shape up in court, even when a fellow's innocent. Anyhow, the lawyer thought he was lucky to be sentenced so light."

"Innocent, uncle! And he stabbed a

man—tried to kill a man—in the gambling saloon of a mining camp! Innocent!"

She shuddered now unreservedly, and tightened her lips, and leaned an elbow on the shelf of the mantelpiece, beside a vase of wild flowers. The parlor, although simply furnished, showed many touches of womanly adornment. Justus gazed thoughtfully at the flowers and fingered the arm of his rocking-chair.

Suddenly, a faint, hoarse shriek grated on the senses of the room. The woman and the man stared at each other. The woman's scream had a queerly

"That's the whistle of the train," said Rood.

Agnes—I can't ever ask you again. How do you know he tried to kill a man? There's such a thing as self-defense, ain't there, or accident, or mistake? A Western gambling saloon is no worse'n a kind of a clubroom for those homeless men. If he tells you to-night that he's innocent of crime, will you believe him? Will you marry William?"

"No," she murmured, almost inaudibly. "I—I can never marry him."

"Then you will ruin us," asserted Justus, in a hard voice. "If you go back on William, you will ruin us. The whole town'll believe he's guilty, if you throw him over. And up to now, I've got the whole town believing, same as I do, that he is innocent. I've had a long, tough fight of it, but I've got 'em on my side—the bank directors, and the church folks, and 'most everybody. First off, I thought I'd have to resign from being cashier, and deacon, and all. But I didn't—I held my head up and hung to it. To-morrow I'll have William himself telling his story to Olerville—how he had to go to jail for a thing he didn't really do—and I'll have it printed in the paper. And then if you go back on him, what'll people think? What'll the bank do, and the church? What good is my long fight then? Agnes, you got to! You got to!"

"No!" said she. "Never! The same roof can never shelter Billy and me. It cannot shelter us to-night."

In the yard outside, the latch of a gate clicked sharply.

Rood darted a calculating glance at her square, defiant shoulders, as she strode, without a word, into a rear room and closed the door.

"Agnes warn't ever much like other girls," he ruminated. "Maybe I've got a chance, yet," and he arose stiffly from his chair.

Who had unlatched the gate moment, with his hand on He was a well-built, . . . fellow; but hisly not been made for his upturned coat hanging brim of his

soft hat gave him the appearance of a fugitive. He patted the gatepost once or twice, as if it were the back of an old friend.

The front door of the house opened slowly. He drew a deep breath.

"That you, William?"

"Sure, father!"

"Come right in—come right in!"

They gripped hands briefly, but their eyes did not meet. Justus cleared his throat.

"Let me take your things, William."

"I haven't any things, father. Where I came from—you see—"

The tentative smile that curved the straight line of the son's lips seemed to set both men more at ease, and Mr. Rood abruptly grasped William's arm.

"Come right into the parlor, my boy. Why, you're real wet, ain't you? We need rain here—the country's awful dry. There! Set down under the lamp, and let's look at you. I'm glad—mighty glad!"

"So am I, you bet!"

Affecting to brush the moisture from his coat, William surveyed the half-lit parlor guardedly.

"How are you, father? How is—how is everybody?"

"Oh, we're tol'able!" replied the cashier; and he followed the other's glance around the room. "Agnes, she sort o' thought she'd wait till we had a little talk," said he. "You and me'll have just a little talk before you talk to the people on Main Street in the morning."

"I'll talk the truth, if anybody asks me for it."

"That'll suit me, William. I've got 'em fixed so they'll ask you for it, too. All this time I've been planning and contriving, so's that no damage needn't come from what happened to you."

"You've stuck to me fine, father," said young Rood. "It's splendid to have folks stick to you when you're in trouble—but when, they don't—don't send any message, or nothing—why—" His voice broke.

Beside the lamp lay a small work-basket and an unfinished bit of silken embroidery, with a threaded needle

piercing it. William's eyes gleamed almost hungrily, and his hand stole across the table and remained there, touching the basket.

"So's that no damage needn't come," reiterated his father. "It's all right, so far. I've won back the respect of the town. I'm still deacon and cashier. Tomorrow, your story will clinch it, and so will the piece in the paper. Tomorrow, there won't be but precious few that won't believe, along with me, that you was punished unfair."

"Unfair?" young Rood echoed, in a strange undertone.

"Yes, punished for what you didn't do—for trying to kill a man who was cheating another fellow at a game of cards in a clubroom. Why, just as the lawyer claimed, anybody in the crowd at the table might 'a' done it!"

A dull flush colored William Rood's cheeks, and in his strong fingers, it seemed that the frail basket must be crushed. When he spoke, it might have been that the words were being dragged mechanically, somehow, from his throat.

"There wasn't any quarrel over cards," said he, "when I stabbed that man. And it was God's own mercy I didn't kill him, for I tried to."

Justus stood motionless on the hearth-rug.

"Who else knows this?" he demanded.

"Everybody in that camp knows it. The lawyer knew it. I guess the judge and jury knew it."

"How could that be—the judge and jury?"

"They knew it, father. But the man was a dog, and they knew that, too. In the mining country, law isn't like it is here."

"It's the lawyer's story—the story that came out in court—that's the story you've got to tell for me in this town to-morrow."

Old Rood's eyebrows came together shrewdly, and he caressed the gold links of his watch chain, as he always did when considering a business question at the bank.

"You asked for the truth, father."

"Why didn't you write it?"

"The warden reads a fellow's letters. I'm going to tell it now, just like I've got to tell—tell anybody that has a right to have it, and that wants to have it."

"Nobody in Olerville," returned Justus, "need have it. I'll stick by you, my boy. Well?"

William leaned backward in the chair. His muscles were relaxed, his eyes were half shut, his limp arms were resting on his knees. The pose was oddly suggestive of a pugilist in a corner of the ropes, awaiting the coming of the referee.

"Well," he began softly, "this man had a claim next to the one I was sharing on. His name was Altimura. He was kind of a Mexican, and he lived in a cabin, with his wife. Her name was Dolores. Around the camp, they called her Dolly. She was a little thing, almost a child, and she put you in mind of a kitten. Altimura was a big man, with a scar on his face, where an Indian woman had shot him, folks said. And they said, too, that he'd won Dolly for his wife—if she was his wife—in a game of monte, from her drunken father."

The melodious bell of the village church rang the hour, and the deacon shifted his weight uneasily from one foot to the other, and back again.

"I used to hear her singing in the Mexican's shack," continued William. "It was sort of pretty, out there in that God-forsaken country. I got friendly with her. Sometimes, passing by, I'd drop in, and she'd give me woman-made things to eat—cookies and sugar tricks. Altimura, he wasn't round there much. He wasn't a real miner, anyhow. He dealt faro, down in the settlement. I tell you, sir, she was just like a kitten. I used to call her a kitten, and she'd laugh."

"Well, the day came—you remember—when I sold out to my partner. I was ready to start East. There was much of a pile in two years. I was terrible lucky to start East, and come home with Agnes."

The name had slid



The front door of the house opened slowly. He drew a deep breath. "That you, William?"

realized it. His mouth twitched, and he went on:

"I put on my store clothes, and packed my grip, and stopped to kind of say good-bye to Dolores. Their cabin was locked up. I peeked through a window, and saw it was cleaned out, too, like they'd moved somewheres else. I thought that was funny, 'cause she hadn't said anything about it the day before.

"So I walked on to the town—maybe a mile—to catch the evening stage. There's only one street in the town. I was walking along with my grip, when I heard somebody yell to me. It was

He was standing in the door hall, and he'd been drinking. Men don't drink, as a rule, for their job, and was—in

and leave camp, hey?"

"I said that was right.

"'Maybe you like to see your kitten, before you go,' he said. 'Most anybody can see her now, my friend;' and he grinned, and jerked his thumb over his shoulder. 'Kittens can't always play,' said he. 'They must be set to work sometimes.'

"I looked into the dance hall. But I didn't have to look. I knew what sort of a place it was."

William Rood's eyes wandered around his father's quiet, restful parlor, fixing themselves in turn upon the vases of smiling flowers, and the cozy fireplace, and finally upon the dainty embroidery in the placid glow of the lamp.

"There was a liquor bar," he proceeded, "and tables along the wall, where men could play cards or buy drinks. The dancing floor was in the middle. At the far end was a platform, where half a dozen poor, painted wom-

en sang and carried on, and over the platform hung a big electric light, that burned blue, and spit, and hissed like a snake. Right underneath that light, I saw Dolly.

"She was frightened and trembly, in her fancy dress. I don't guess she'd been there long. The tears had made streaks in the paint on her face. The other women were guying her.

"Something seemed to pound inside my brain, same as a stamp mill, and all of a sudden the electric seemed to burn red.

"Altimura, he laughed, very low, and twisted his mustache, and swaggered down the edge of the room among the tables. At the bar stood an old miner, a friend of mine, named Denny O'Hearn. He was showing the bartender a new hunting knife he had. I went over to him.

"Let me look at that knife for a minute, Denny," I said."

The drowsy night sounds of a New England village drifted into the room—the twitter of a vagrant bird, the leisurely creaking of a belated farm wagon, the soft drip of rain from the leaves of trees. Across the street a door was opened, and a dog barked a joyous greeting to somebody, and the door was closed again.

Young Rood bent forward tensely in his chair. He straightened his shoulders and clenched his fists. He was like an athlete who had heard the gong. Breathlessly, he watched his father.

But his father did not observe him. The old man raised his eyes to the ceiling and shook an uplifted hand.

"What have I done to deserve this?" he complained shrilly.

William sprang to his feet.

"I am not ashamed, father. And I have paid my penalty."

"You? You?" protested Justus. "What of me? What of my position in the town? What of the chance of Agnes marrying you, now? For me to keep folks' respect, after all I've told 'em about you, I've got to take you into my house, and marry you to Agnes—you, who love another man's wife, and try to kill him in a den of wickedness,

just for the sake of your low-down, painted——"

"Stop, father! Stop right there!"

"Because why?"

"Because her troubles are over. Little Dolores died before my trial."

"I don't care what became of her," snarled old Rood. "It's Olerville I'm thinking of. I brought you up to be a credit to me here, and now—how can I sit in the bank, or walk the street, and this scandal hanging over me, ready to fall whenever any busybody in the village worms it out of you? How can I live in the same house with a would-be murderer?"

"Shall I go, then?" said William steadily.

Justus flung his forefinger in front of him.

"What else?" he stormed. "That's the long and short of it. Maybe, without you here, I can weather it yet. Maybe——"

"Take care—the lamp!"

Both reached for the wavering pedestal, and their hands met. The son pinned the other's hand to the table.

"I shall go to-night," he muttered. "You needn't ever see me here again. You said that you brought me up to be a credit to you. Well, except for that mad blow of a knife, I have lived clean and straight, and I never have wronged a man, nor a woman, nor a child. Do you understand that? Do you believe that?"

"No!" cried Justus, trying to wrench himself free.

His face was close to William's, and, even in his passion, he noted the blank wonder that burst abruptly into the young man's eyes. Old Rood turned, and saw Agnes standing in the opening of the tall window.

The rain had disarranged her hair charmingly, so that it was no longer smooth and prim; and an over-ripe lilac bloom had scattered its purple petals upon her head. With the wet grass and the rain to her gown, and the rain on her face, she looked, against the background of water,



Even in his passion he noted the blank wonder that burst abruptly into the young man's eyes.

wild and mysterious creature of the woods.

"Spying, hey?" Justus growled.

"Call it what you choose," said the girl.

She did not glance at William.

"Then you have heard a fine confession!" sneered the father.

"I have heard two confessions, Uncle Justus. His—and yours."

"Mine?"

"Yes, uncle; yours!"

"Fishiness. Of a mean, low-down, dirty soul."

William Rood, under the influence of his father's words, I don't ask you to look to me—I don't de-

serve that—but my father is an old man—he——"

"I know what he is, at last," she interposed. "He has confessed to-night what he is. He puts himself before everything and everybody else in the world. The only important thing to him is his own standing, and what other people think about him. And I'm sorry for you, Uncle Justus—downright sorry for you!"

"How dare you?" choked the deacon. "I've given you a home, and——"

"And I paid you for it," declared Agnes. "I've done your drudgery, and I've cost you nothing. We're quits, I tell you! We've struck a balance, and we're quits! I'm through with you,

and through with this house, and with this town, forever."

She turned slowly, and her gaze met William's.

"My own confession comes now," she whispered. "I heard the story you told your father, Billy. I believe that you are true, and human. It has made me love you more than—— If you will forgive me, Billy, and take me for your wife—take me away——"

The young man stretched out his eager arms.

At ten o'clock the next morning, Mr. Brainard, editor of the *Olverville Gleaner*, kept his prearranged appointment at the bank.

"I wanted to tell you," said the cashier, "about Agnes—Miss Agnes

Bentley. She left town last night for Chicago, where she's going to marry my son. Agnes has relatives in Chicago, you see, and William having found a good job out there, sort of unexpected—why, we thought it would be handier than to have the wedding here."

Brainard noticed an odd look, partly of vague consternation, partly of desperate sadness, on the old man's hard face.

"Maybe they'll come back here to live, after a while, Mr. Rood."

The cashier stared straight at the desk in front of him.

"Well," concluded Brainard, "the marriage ought to be a great satisfaction to you, and I congratulate you, sir."

"Thank you," said Justus impassively.



In a Second-hand Store

YOU'VE precious things to show, you say?

My vender, here, with soft, dark eye
Sad with the Orient's long decay,

Yet something bold, and something shy?

You push a sofa to my view;

Your coaxing finger rubs the wood,

Swearing its polish old and true,

Those bulging springs robust and good.

My cunning one, the way you plead

Had left my wallet safe and fast,

But I am dreaming dreams indeed

On this Rialto of the past.

Not for its quaint and massive frame

The old lounge tempts me more and more,

But in an hour of wondrous game

I drove its like—my "coach and four."

Wrap me the firedogs; I shall see

The keeping room of simpler days;

Red apples, hung a-row for me,

Shall stew and sputter by the blaze.

And oh, be careful of the rest!

To yield this plunder, heaped and queer,

Sweet broken homes gave up their best,

Pale fingers dropped their treasures here.

—JEANNIE PENDLETON



THE MAN INSIDE

by Natalie Sumner Lincoln

Author of "The Trevor Case," "The Lost Despatch," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ACCUSATION.

ELEANOR dropped her embroidery and gazed out into the garden, with its flower beds lit by the fading rays of the western sun, and the soft wind from the open window fanned her cheeks. An involuntary sigh escaped her.

"A penny for your thoughts," and Douglas, who had approached unnoticed, stepped up to the window seat. A smile curved Eleanor's pretty mouth as she made room for him beside her and slipped her hand confidently in his.

"Do you think a penny would bring me any comfort?" she asked.

"Take me for a penny, and I will do my utmost to comfort you." Douglas kissed her gently as she leaned her head against his broad shoulder.

"Take you? Gladly." She raised her hand and pressed it against his cheek. "And I am richer in happiness than I ever was before."

"My darling!" Douglas checked his impetuosity; the dark circles under Eleanor's eyes had deepened, and her extreme nervousness was betrayed by her restless glances about the room, and the incessant movement of her fingers. "Now for your thoughts."

"My thoughts? They are all with Cynthia. Oh, Douglas," straightening up, "I can't tell her of Fred Lane's arrest! On top of all she has borne, it would be cruel, cruel!"

"Is she better?"

"She is at last sleeping naturally. When she awoke from the opiate some hours ago she evinced no interest, and so I was able to avoid the questions that I feared she would ask me."

"She was probably still under the effects of the opiate and too drowsy to recall the events of last night."

"I dread her awakening."

"You will have to put off telling her of Lane's arrest and Annette's death until she is strong enough physically to bear the shock."

"Do you think him guilty?" The question seemed wrung from her.

"Of which crime?"

"Of both."

"I don't see how it is possible for him to have had anything to do with Annette's death," replied Douglas thoughtfully. "For the very reason you pointed out when Brett was accusing him this morning. It would be physically impossible for him to have left the room and locked and bolted the door on the inside."

"What do you think caused her death?"

"I think it highly probable that she committed suicide."

"You don't think the draft blew out the gas?"

"A draft? Where on earth could it come from? Both windows were tightly closed, and the door also. Upon my word"—turning to look at her—"you don't place any faith in that old legend about the ghost of your great-great-aunt's habit of extinguishing all

The first installment of "The Man Inside" appeared in the February number of SMITH'S.

lights in her room after eleven o'clock at night?"

"Yes, I do," reluctantly.

"Oh, come now!"

A chuckle escaped Douglas, but it died out suddenly. He had remarkably keen eyesight, and, as he raised his head, he encountered a steady stare from an oil portrait hanging on the wall opposite him. It was not the stare that attracted his attention, but the remarkable whiteness of the eyeballs in the painted face on which the light of the window was reflected. As he looked, the eyes seemed to blink, then were gone. With an exclamation he rose, startling Eleanor by his sudden movement, and walked across the room until he stood directly in front of the painting, which was life-size, and represented a handsome man in a navy uniform of the War of 1812. On closer inspection, the eyes appeared not to be painted in at all, and were represented by shadows. As he retreated from the portrait, however, the shadows took form, and he distinctly saw the long lashes and eyeballs. It was an optical illusion, cleverly conceived by the artist, and, satisfied on that point, he returned to Eleanor, who had watched his movements with growing curiosity.

"Why this sudden interest in my great-great-grandfather?" she asked.

"It's a fine portrait." He reseated himself by her side. "I didn't notice it last night. What is the old gentleman's name?"

"Commodore Barry Thornton. My father was named for him. He inherited the black hair, blue eyes, and tastes of the old sea fighter," nodding toward the portrait. "Do you know on what grounds they arrested Fred Lane for the murder of Senator Carew?"

"Only in a general way. It is known that the senator opposed his engagement to Cynthia, that they had a bitter quarrel that night, and that Lane left the ball to look for Cynthia's carriage. He was gone some time, and, when the carriage did turn up, Senator Carew was seated in it—dead."

"Is that evidence enough to convict?"

"It's purely circumstantial evidence,"

evasively. "I don't know yet what new testimony Mrs. Winthrop may have contributed to cause his arrest."

"Mrs. Winthrop's attitude is incomprehensible to me," burst out Eleanor. "Fred's father, Governor Lane, was her husband's best friend, and Mr. Winthrop was under great financial obligations to him when he died. And now look at the way Mrs. Winthrop is treating that friend's son—hounding him to the gallows! Is that gratitude?" with biting scorn.

"Some natures don't wear well under an obligation, and the cloven hoof crops out." Douglas pushed the window farther open. "Ingratitude is an abominable sin, and the one most frequently committed." A faint knock on the hall door interrupted him. "Come in," he called, and Brett opened the door. He drew back when he saw Douglas was not alone.

"Don't go," said Eleanor, gathering up her embroidery and workbag. "I must run upstairs and ask the nurse how Miss Carew is."

She hastened toward the door, which Brett still held open, but he stopped her on the threshold.

"I will be greatly obliged if you will spare me half an hour, Miss Thornton. When you come downstairs again will be time enough," he added, as Eleanor stepped back into the library.

Eleanor studied his impassive face intently for a second before answering. Then: "I'll be down again shortly," she said, and she disappeared up the hall.

Brett closed the door carefully, selected a chair near Douglas, and sat down heavily. Douglas pulled out his cigarette case and handed it to the detective, who picked out a cigarette, and, striking a match, settled back into his chair contentedly as he watched the rings of smoke curling upward.

"I am glad of an opportunity to have a quiet word with you, Mr. Hunter," he began. "Things have been moving pretty swiftly to-day, and I'm free to confess that the death of Annette has stumped me. Was it murder or suicide?"

"Everything points to suicide."

"I'm not so sure of that," drawing his chair nearer and lowering his voice. "I've been searching Annette's belongings, and have found several things that puzzle me completely."

"What were they?"

"Well, for one thing, the torn kimono."

"What? You don't mean——"

"Exactly. Annette apparently owned a wrapper precisely like Miss Thornton's, and it was she who paid you that midnight visit when you spent the night in the library on Tuesday evening at the Carew residence. I found the wrapper upstairs among her effects. She had mended the tear very neatly, but the slip that you tore out of it that night exactly fitted the darn. I had the slip with me in my pocket and fitted the two together."

"Great Scott! What on earth was she doing in the library at that hour?"

"Aye, what?" significantly. "You recollect that Nicodemus testified that Annette did not want to sleep on the third floor because 'it wor too far off from her folks, an' she had to be down whar she could hear dem.' It looks as if Annette were in the habit of taking an unusual interest in her mistress' affairs."

"It does indeed," agreed Douglas, knocking the ashes from his cigarette on the window ledge. "Did you get any information from Annette yesterday?"

"Very little. I saw her soon after I found your note telling me of her interview with Colonel Thornton. She admitted that she had information that she was willing to sell, and finally made an appointment to see me early this morning. Thanks to circumstance—call it murder or suicide—I am no wiser than I was twenty-four hours ago."

"Do you still cling to the theory that she met her death because some one was afraid of what she would tell you to-day?"

"Yes; it looks that way to me. And yet I can't for the life of me discover how any one could have committed a murder in that locked room."

"In searching the room, did you discover any secret passages leading to it?" exclaimed Douglas.

"I did not. I thought I might find one, so I tapped that entire wall, but could not discover a trace of any concealed door. I tell you, Mr. Hunter, Annette did not commit suicide." Brett spoke earnestly. "She expected to receive a large sum of money within a few days; I virtually pledged the amount to her. There was no object in her taking her own life."

"Why don't you investigate her past, Brett? That might give you a clew."

"I have already cabled her description to the Paris police, asking for any information about her that they may have. I expect an answer shortly."

"Good! Tell me, what information did Mrs. Winthrop supply that induced you to arrest Captain Lane?"

"She told me that he had been seen on the street Monday night when looking for Miss Carew's carriage, and that he was carrying a sharp letter file."

"Who gave her that information?"

"She didn't state, but I have an idea that it was Annette. Probably the girl wanted money and went to her direct. She was none too scrupulous, apparently."

"I believe you are right," exclaimed Douglas.

"Mrs. Winthrop also told me that she found, tucked away among her brother's papers, yesterday, an envelope containing a threatening letter. The contents were written in a disguised hand, but the postmark on the envelope read 'Lanesville, Maryland.' She is firmly convinced that if young Lane didn't write those letters himself, he instigated them."

"Oh, nonsense! He isn't such a fool," roughly. "I believe he is innocent."

At that moment the door opened and Colonel Thornton walked in. He flung his hat on the table. "I am glad to find you both here," he said. "Don't get up," as Douglas rose. "I'll take this chair. I called you up at headquarters, Brett, but they told me you had just

come here, so I hurried over from Mrs. Winthrop's to catch you."

"Does she want me for anything in particular?" asked Brett.

"She simply wanted to ask a few more details in regard to the coroner's inquest. She is very much upset over Annette's extraordinary death. It seems that the girl made some statement to her, and Mrs. Winthrop depended on her testimony to prove Lane killed Senator Carew."

"What did I tell you?" Brett glanced triumphantly at Douglas. "I'm afraid, though I'm morally certain of Captain Lane's guilt, that we will have some difficulty in establishing the fact."

"You will," agreed Colonel Thornton. "So far, you have only proved, first, that there was enmity between the two men; second, that Lane had the opportunity; third, that Annette saw him with the letter file, the weapon used to kill Carew, in his hand."

"The last has not been sworn to," objected Douglas. "And Annette is dead; so that statement, the most important of all, cannot be accepted as testimony."

"Unless some one else saw Lane in the street at the time Annette did," burst in Brett swiftly.

"If they had, they would have come forward before this," reasoned Douglas. "I consider it extremely probable that Annette was lying when she said she saw a letter file in Lane's hand. Remember the drenching rain. Walking in what proved to be a cloudburst would make most people blind to so small a thing as a letter file carried in a man's closed fist."

"What on earth was her object in making such a statement?" asked Colonel Thornton.

"That is what we have yet to find out," answered Douglas. "And there's another point, Brett, that you have overlooked."

"What's that?"

"You recollect that you told me Senator Carew's clothes were absolutely dry when his dead body was found in the carriage. Considering the down-pour of rain that night, it seems in-

credible that he should have not got wet."

"I have come to the conclusion that the coachman, Hamilton, lied when he said he had not stopped at the house for Senator Carew on Monday night," replied Brett. "Having lied in the beginning, he is now afraid to admit the truth for fear that he may be convicted of killing the senator."

"That sounds plausible," acknowledged Colonel Thornton.

"I don't believe it." Douglas shook his head obstinately. "It has been proved already that the senator did not spend Monday evening at home. I tell you, the key to this mystery is how Senator Carew got into that carriage on such a stormy night without getting his clothes wet. When you have solved that problem, you will know who committed the murder."

Thornton was about to reply when the hall door was thrown open, and Eleanor, her lovely eyes opened to their widest, exclaimed, "Uncle Dana, the secretary of state wishes to see you."

"God bless me!" Colonel Thornton sprang out of his chair as the distinguished statesman followed Eleanor into the room.

"Please don't let me disturb you," exclaimed the secretary, as Douglas stepped forward, and Brett edged toward the door. "I only dropped in for a second to pick up Mr. Hunter," laying a hand on Douglas' arm. "They told me at the Albany that you were stopping here for a few days; so I came over in my motor to ask you to drive back to my office with me."

"Won't you be seated, Mr. Secretary?" asked Colonel Thornton, as Douglas hastily gathered up some papers that he had left on the center table, and started for the door.

"Thanks, no; it is imperative that I get to my office—"

The secretary stopped speaking as a man darted inside the door and slammed it shut. In his haste the newcomer collided with Douglas, and then collapsed into the nearest chair.

"Philip Winthrop!" gasped Eleanor,



"Come back!" he shouted. "Stop her! Stop her! Don't let her slip away!"

while the others gazed at the exhausted figure in amazement.

"Have you any brandy?" exclaimed the secretary, noticing the ghastly color of Winthrop's face. Thornton hastily produced a decanter, and gave the half-fainting man a stiff drink, which in a few minutes had the desired effect of bringing him round.

"Thanks," he murmured faintly.

"What does the doctor mean by letting you come out?" asked Thornton.

"You are in no condition to leave your room."

"I'll be better in a minute; give me some more." Winthrop motioned toward the decanter. Colonel Thornton glanced questioningly at the secretary, who nodded assent, so he gave Winthrop a milder dose, which restored him somewhat, and his voice was stronger when he resumed speech. "The doctor doesn't know I'm here. I slipped out while mother was lying down, caught a cab at the corner, and drove over

here. I want to see the detective, Brett."

"Here I am, sir." Brett stepped forward into the circle about Winthrop.

"Good!" Winthrop raised himself just in time to see Eleanor open the hall door softly. "Come back!" he shouted; then, as she paid no attention to him: "Stop her! Stop her! Don't let her slip away!"

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded Colonel Thornton, as he stepped forward and pulled Eleanor back into the room and shut the door. "You drunken oaf! Stop bellowing at my niece!"

"I won't, I won't!" Winthrop had worked himself into a frenzy. "She can't drug me here fortunately. I won't be silent! *She is an international spy, and she murdered Senator Carew.*"

CHAPTER XIX.

WEAVING THE WEB.

Slowly the meaning of Winthrop's words dawned on the four men.

"It's false! False as hell!" thundered Douglas. He stepped forward and seized Winthrop in a grip of iron and shook him as a dog would shake a rat; then, before the others could intervene, threw the struggling man on the floor. "Bah! You're not worth killing!"

Whimpering with rage and weakness, Winthrop caught hold of the table, dragged himself upright, and stood swaying on his feet.

"It's true, it's true," he reiterated. "Look at her!" pointing a shaking finger to where Eleanor stood aghast, watching the scene. Her hand was on the doorknob, and she seemed poised for instant flight. A curious smile twisted her pale lips as the men turned and faced her.

"He doesn't seem to have recovered from delirium tremens," she remarked slowly.

"It may be, Miss Thornton." The secretary of state spoke with grave deliberation. "But it is a serious charge that he is making, and I think it had better be investigated—now."

Eleanor winced visibly; then, controlling herself, advanced farther into the room.

"I am at your service," she said, with sudden hauteur. "But, as I have an important engagement later, I trust you will be brief."

"Sit by me here, Eleanor." Colonel Thornton, who had listened to Winthrop's charges in stupefied silence, pulled forward an armchair. "Mr. Secretary, will you occupy the desk chair, and you," turning to Winthrop, who cowered back as he caught the smoldering wrath in the older man's eyes, "sit over there?" pointing to a chair some distance away.

Brett, seeing that Winthrop was too exhausted to move without assistance, piloted him to the chair indicated by Thornton, and, getting another chair, placed himself by Winthrop's side. Douglas, at a sign from the secretary, sat down at the farther end of the table and handed the statesman some paper and ink.

"Now, Mr. Winthrop," began the secretary, "if you are more composed, kindly answer my questions. Why have you waited all this time before mentioning that you think Miss Thornton guilty of Senator Carew's murder?"

"Because I've been drugged, so that I couldn't give evidence. I tried twice to get a message to Brett, but Annette said she couldn't reach him."

"Annette!" chorused Colonel Thornton, Brett, and Douglas, while the secretary and Eleanor looked their surprise.

"Yes, Annette," peevishly. "She used to come in occasionally to give me water when those devilish nurses were neglecting me. She told me that Brett was seldom at the house, and that she never had an opportunity to speak to him alone."

"The monumental liar——" Brett checked himself. "Never mind that now, Mr. Winthrop. Go on with your story."

"She told me how Miss Thornton used to steal in and drug me, and asked me why she did it."

"Great heavens!" Eleanor's exclamation was followed by a half-strangled laugh, which ended in a sob. "What a viper!"

"You weren't there last night," sputtered Winthrop vindictively, "and therefore I didn't get my usual dose, so I can tell what I know to-day."

"Suppose you continue your story without making comments," directed the secretary sternly.

Winthrop nodded sullenly, then began: "You recollect that I spent Monday night at the Alibi Club, Brett?"

"Yes."

"Well, when I left there, I motored up Nineteenth Street, instead of taking the more direct way home. I thought I would turn into Massachusetts Avenue at Dupont Circle, where there was less danger of running into electric cars, for the rain was falling in such torrents that I could hardly see through my windshield.

"When opposite the Owen residence, I ran into a lot of waiting carriages and motors, and had to slow down. In fact, I went so slowly that by the time I was nearly opposite Miss Thornton's residence, I stalled my engine and had to get out in all the wet and crank up." He paused dramatically. "You can imagine my surprise when I saw Miss Thornton come down under the awning that led to her front door and stand at the curb looking up and down the street."

"How do you know it was Miss Thornton?" broke in Douglas harshly.

"There was a street lamp by the side of the awning, and the light fell full on her. Besides, I recognized the scarlet cloak she was wearing. I have seen it many times."

"What did my niece do besides standing still and looking up and down the street?" demanded Colonel Thornton scornfully.

"She ran out into the middle of the street and down to where a carriage was drawn up at the curb, opened the door, stood there, talking apparently, for a few minutes, then shut the door, and bolted back to the awning, and I

presume entered her house, as I saw no more of her."

"What did you do next?" inquired Douglas, with peculiar emphasis.

Winthrop flushed at his tone. "I had curiosity enough to step back and see that it was Senator Carew's landau, the last of a long queue of vehicles, at which she had stopped; then I went on about my business."

"Do you mean to say that you did not investigate further?" asked the secretary.

"No. I knew enough never to interfere with Senator Carew's love affairs." His sneer was intolerable.

"By God!" Colonel Thornton sprang to his feet and advanced on Winthrop, but Brett stepped between the two men.

"Have a little patience, colonel," he said, pushing the irate man toward his seat. "Then you can settle with Mr. Winthrop."

"Do you think I'm going to sit here and listen to aspersions on my niece's character?" Colonel Thornton shouted. "Let me get my hands on that scoundrel!"

"Wait, Uncle Dana." Eleanor leaned forward and placed her hand on his arm. "Let him finish; then I will speak," and her lips closed ominously.

"That is excellent advice," agreed the secretary. "Resume your seat, Colonel Thornton." His tone of command was not to be denied, and Thornton dropped back into his chair. "Now, Mr. Winthrop, explain your last remark."

"Senator Carew told me that he expected to marry Miss Thornton, and that he intended to spend the evening with her."

Douglas leaned forward and gazed earnestly at Eleanor, but she refused to meet his look, and, with a troubled expression, he turned his attention to Winthrop, who was again speaking.

"I told Senator Carew that I had heard a member of one of the embassies here declare that Miss Thornton was an international spy."

"And what did he say to that statement?"

"He said that he would look into the matter."

"When did this conversation take place?"

"On Monday afternoon."

"And is that all you have to go upon for such an accusation?" inquired Brett scornfully.

Douglas was gazing moodily ahead of him. A memory of Paris, of Eleanor's extraordinary behavior there, of the whispers that had followed her about, harassed him. Had his faith been misplaced? No, a thousand times no! He would pin all hope of future happiness on her innocence and purity of soul. He rose suddenly, and stepped behind her chair, and laid his hand encouragingly on her shoulder. She looked up, startled; then, seeing him, she smiled, and her hand stole up to meet his. His firm clasp gave her courage to face the situation, for it told her of his unshaken confidence and love.

Winthrop glowered at them when he saw the tableau, and his eyes gleamed wickedly. "It is very obvious," he said, "that Senator Carew found my statement was true, and charged her with being a spy; then left her house. Exposure meant Miss Thornton's ruin. Even her influential relatives"—he glanced meaningly at Thornton—"could not intervene to save her; so she took the law into her own hands, picked up the letter file, stole out of the house, opened the carriage door, engaged the senator in conversation—and stabbed him."

A strained silence followed, which the secretary was the first to break. He turned directly to Eleanor. "You called to see Secretary Wyndham at the navy department on Wednesday morning, did you not, Miss Thornton?"

Douglas' hand tightened involuntarily, but Eleanor showed no sign of agitation as she answered, "Yes, Mr. Secretary, I did."

"Have you anything further to say, Mr. Winthrop?"

"Not now, Mr. Secretary."

"Then let me suggest," exclaimed Thornton, "that Mr. Winthrop, in trying to implicate my niece in a das-

tardly crime, has but established his own guilt."

"How so?" The question shot from Winthrop's clenched teeth.

"We all know from the testimony of reputable servants that Senator Carew and you had quarreled," continued Thornton. "We know your habits are none of the best; we know that you have suddenly become possessed of large sums of money—"

Winthrop moistened his dry lips. "I deny it," he exclaimed.

Thornton paid no attention to the interruption. "You alone knew where Senator Carew was spending the evening, and you went there and lay in wait for him. And now, you despicable cur, you are trying to lay the blame on an innocent girl."

Winthrop rose, goaded by the scornful looks of the others. "I may have had the motive and the opportunity to kill Senator Carew," he admitted sullenly, "but I did not have—the weapon. The criminal sits there." He pointed at Eleanor. "I am absolutely positive of her guilt, for the letter file used to kill the senator belonged to a silver desk set given her by Miss Cynthia Carew."

Thornton frowned and turned a troubled countenance toward Eleanor, who nodded reassuringly, as she rose to her feet, stepped back to Douglas' side, and, leaning on the back of the chair she had just vacated, addressed the secretary.

"I am a young girl, Mr. Secretary," she began, "and living alone, as I do, I have been forced, on numerous occasions, to use my own judgment. It would have been better, perhaps, had I spoken of certain events before this, but I was so alarmed by the position in which I found myself placed that I foolishly held my tongue. I had hoped that certain facts would not become public. These facts Mr. Winthrop has maliciously distorted. I have been guilty of a blunder, not a crime."

"I would be most happy to believe you, Miss Thornton," said the secretary gravely, "but to probe this matter

to the bottom, I must ask certain questions."

"Which I will gladly answer."

"Did Senator Carew call on you on Monday night?"

"He did; reaching my house about nine-thirty, just before the rain commenced."

"Did any one else know that he was there?"

"Only my Japanese butler, Fugi, who admitted him. My cousin, Mrs. Truxton, who is spending the winter with me, had gone to bed immediately after dinner."

"Was Annette in the house?" asked Brett quickly.

"No; it was her evening out. She returned shortly after the senator left."

"At what hour did he go?" questioned the secretary.

"At about half past twelve o'clock."

"Wasn't that rather an unusual hour for him to stay?"

Eleanor colored warmly. "It was; most unusual," she admitted. "But the pouring rain was responsible for that. He telephoned for a cab or a taxi, but they were all engaged, so he waited, hoping that one would eventually be sent to my house."

"Mr. Winthrop spoke of an awning at your door, Miss Thornton," again broke in Brett. "I have passed your house a number of times and have never seen one."

"I had a large tea on Monday afternoon, and had the awning put up for that occasion, as the weather was threatening and my house stands some distance from the curb. The awning was removed early the next morning."

"It is not so very far from your house to the senator's residence," mused the secretary. "I should have thought, considering the lateness of the hour, that he would have walked home."

"But he was not going home, Mr. Secretary. He told me that he was going to drive to your house, as he had to see you immediately on your return that night."

"Indeed?" The secretary was bending forward in his eagerness. "Did the

senator state what he wished to see me about?"

"Only in a general way. He said that he had that afternoon discovered proof of a gigantic plot against the United States; that the secrets of the government were being betrayed; and that he must give you the names of the arch traitor and his confederate. He called up your house by telephone earlier in the afternoon, and found that you were expected home on the eleven o'clock train."

"I had intended to take it, but was detained at the last moment by pressing business and did not reach Washington until the following night," explained the secretary. "If he couldn't get a cab, why did he not call up his own house and send for his carriage earlier in the evening?"

"He tried to, Mr. Secretary, but his telephone was out of order, and no one answered the stable call."

"How, then, did he get his own carriage?"

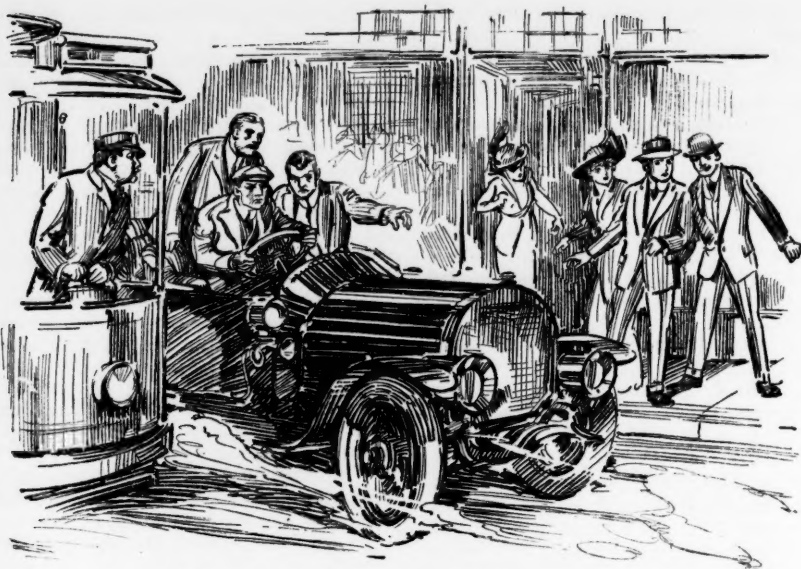
"My drawing-room windows look out on Nineteenth Street, and the senator, in one of his numerous trips to discover if the rain was letting up, saw his carriage standing in front of my door. He recognized the horses and Hamilton by the light from the lamp-post under which they stood, waiting for the long queue of carriages ahead to move up the street. The senator instantly decided to enter his carriage, wait for Cynthia, and then drive to your house, Mr. Secretary."

"So that's how he got into the carriage without getting wet," cried Brett. "The awning protected him. I suppose he just popped into his carriage and said nothing to Hamilton, as he intended to wait for his niece, and Hamilton was too befuddled with drink and the storm to notice the opening and closing of the door. Did you watch the senator leave the house?"

Eleanor shook her head. "No," she said.

"Miss Thornton"—the secretary bent forward impressively—"were you engaged to Senator Carew?"

Eleanor's color rose, but she faced



They passed a crowded trolley car, and the passengers stared at their mad speed.

the keen eyes watching her unflinchingly. "No, Mr. Secretary; the senator did me the honor to ask me to marry him on Monday night, but I refused."

"Then you deny running out after his carriage, as Mr. Winthrop declares you did?"

"No, sir, I do not deny it. Mr. Winthrop is quite right." She paused, and the men looked at her expectantly. "I have a quest in life—not the one attributed to me by this gentleman"—waving her hand scornfully toward Winthrop, who was listening to her statement with an incredulous smile distorting his features—"but an honorable legacy which my dear mother left me to execute. On bidding me a hasty good night, Senator Carew, whether in jest or earnest, told me that if I would marry him, he would assist me to bring my quest to a successful conclusion."

"Would you mind stating what this mission is?" asked the secretary.

Eleanor hesitated. "It is a family matter, and I would rather not."

The secretary did not press the point. "Continue your story, Miss Thornton."

"About five minutes or more after the senator left, I came to the conclusion that my duty"—she glanced appealingly at Douglas—"compelled me to marry him. On an impulse, I picked up my cloak, which was hanging on the hall rack, opened the front door, and ran down to the curb. The Carew landau is easily recognized, and, after peering up and down the street, I saw that it had moved up several doors. Without stopping to think or to consider the consequences, I ran down the street to the carriage and opened the door—" She stopped, breathless.

"Go on, go on!" urged Douglas.

"I opened the door," she repeated, "and, as God is my witness, I found Senator Carew sitting there—dead!"

CHAPTER XX.

AN INTERNATIONAL INTRIGUE.

As her voice ceased on the last solemn word, Eleanor read astonishment

and incredulity on her listeners' faces, and her heart sank. She bit her lips to hide their trembling.

"How did you discover Senator Carew was dead, Miss Thornton?" asked the secretary harshly. "It has been testified that the interior of the landau was dark, and that the carriage lamps had been extinguished."

"I did not see he was dead." Eleanor hesitated. "After opening the carriage door, I spoke to him several times. On getting no reply, I put out my hand and accidentally touched his chest, and my fingers encountered the round base of the letter file." Her large eyes filled

with horror at the recollection. "I did not, of course, know what it was then, but I realized that something was dreadfully wrong. The senator's silence, the touch of that cold metal in such a place, terrified me. I drew back, instinctively closed the carriage door, and fled to my house. The next morning I heard of the murder from Annette."

"Why did you not come forward with this information then?" asked Brett sternly.

"Because I was afraid," Eleanor threw out her hands appealingly. "I had no one to verify my statements, and I feared I would be charged with the crime. Confident of my own innocence, I did not think any information I might furnish would assist the arrest of the guilty person."

"You should have spoken sooner," said Colonel Thornton sharply, but tempered his rebuke by rising and leading Eleanor to his own comfortable chair, into which she sank wearily. "But the harm your silence has done can fortunately be remedied. Philip Win-

throp," swinging around to the young man, "your plea that you lacked the weapon used is puerile. You could easily have picked up one at the club; letter files are kept on most desks. Knowing where Senator Carew was to be on Monday night, you laid your plans carefully beforehand, and, with devilish ingenuity, picked out an unusual weapon, so that it would be harder to trace the murder to you."

"You lie!" growled Winthrop fiercely; then, addressing them all, "I had nothing what-



ever to do with the senator's death. She did it, though your misplaced sympathy blinds you to the truth."

"Miss Thornton's sex will not shield her," declared the secretary firmly, "if she be guilty. But, Mr. Winthrop, your story also will be investigated to the minutest detail. Until your innocence is proved without the shadow of a doubt, you will consider yourself under arrest. Brett will see that the proper papers are made out."

Winthrop blanched. "I'm—I'm—in no condition to go to jail," he stammered. "It is monstrous!"

"Just a moment," broke in Douglas. He had been in deep thought, and had paid but little attention to their conversation. "You say, Winthrop, that the letter file used to slay Senator Carew belonged to a desk set given to Miss Thornton by Miss Cynthia Carew?"

"I do," exclaimed Winthrop positively.

Eleanor's surprise was reflected in her uncle's face. Was Douglas taking sides against her? Her eyes filled with tears, which she winked hastily away.

"Have you such a desk set, Eleanor?" demanded Douglas.

"Yes. Cynthia gave it to me last Christmas."

"Is the letter file missing?"

The answer was slow in coming. Then: "Yes," she breathed faintly.

"Ah! What did I tell you?" cried Winthrop triumphantly.

Douglas paid no attention to him, but continued to address Eleanor. "Where do you keep this desk set?"

"In the writing room across the hall from my drawing-room."

"Describe your first floor, please, Eleanor."

"The drawing-room is to the left of the front door; to the right is the small writing room, back of that the staircase, and back of the drawing-room is the dining room. The house is what is called three-quarters."

"I see. Does the dining room communicate with the drawing-room?"

"Yes; there are old-fashioned sliding doors between the two rooms."

"Do you use portières?"

"Yes, on all the doors."

Douglas smiled at her encouragingly, then turned to the four men. "Miss Thornton has testified that no one of her household knew that Senator Carew was with her Monday night. She is mistaken. There was one other person who knew that fact; who had ample opportunity to overhear her conversation with the senator, to take the letter file from the desk in the writing room, and to steal after him when he left, open the carriage door, and stab him."

"Who was it?" questioned Eleanor breathlessly, while the others hung on his words.

"The servant who admitted him."

"Fugi!" gasped Thornton. "My God! I believe you're right! But the motive, man?"

"An international intrigue," Douglas caught the eye of the secretary, who nodded appreciatively. "Miss Thornton has already stated that Senator Carew told her that he had discovered proof of a plot against this country, that the secrets of this government were being betrayed, that he knew the names of the spy or spies, and that he was on the way to inform the secretary of state. Concealed in one of the portières, Fugi overheard all this, and, to save his own life, he killed Senator Carew."

"You've solved it," declared Brett, rising. "I'll run over to your house now, Miss Thornton, and catch Fugi before he can get away."

"I don't think you'll find him there," interposed Eleanor. "Mrs. Truxton went out in my motor for a drive this afternoon, and Fugi, who acts as chauffeur as well as butler, is driving the car. I expect them here at any moment."

"So much the better."

"There is a car drawn up alongside of mine now," exclaimed the secretary, who had gone to the window overlooking the street.

Brett started for the door, but before he reached it, it was flung open and Mrs. Truxton precipitated herself into the room. Her hat was cocked on one side in the most rakish manner, and her

flushed face testified to her perturbed state of mind.

"I've found you, Mr. Secretary!" she exclaimed, slamming the door shut. "Don't go," as Brett moved past her. "I went to your house, then to the state department—" She stopped, breathless.

"Sit down," said the secretary soothingly. "And tell me why you wished to see me so urgently."

"Oh, dear, I'm so confused!" Mrs. Truxton drew a long breath, then plunged into her story. "I stopped at our house, Eleanor, as I had forgotten to bring my writing materials here. I found my letter book in my room where I had left it, and, on opening it, found this letter addressed to you, Mr. Secretary," drawing out an envelope from her hand bag. "I can't conceive where it came from," added the poor woman, "except that I left my letter book in Eleanor's drawing-room on Monday night on my way to bed. I was up early Tuesday morning, before any of the servants were down and, on entering the drawing-room, found my letter book still lying on the table, with several of its leaves turned over. I gathered up all the papers without looking at them carefully, and took them up to my desk and laid them away in a drawer. This is the first time I have opened the letter book, for, in your absence, Eleanor, I have used your writing room." Mrs. Truxton paused to take breath. "It's marked 'important,' and that's why I hurried after you. Besides, handwriting is like a photograph to me, and I never forget one I have seen. That letter is from Senator Carew."

"Good God! The missing letter!" shouted Brett.

The secretary took the letter from Mrs. Truxton, tore it open, and, in a voice of suppressed excitement, read its contents aloud.

"MY DEAR MR. SECRETARY: I am writing to you in case I do not see you before you attend the cabinet meeting to-morrow morning. Your servant tells me that you are expected home on a late train to-night, but I may be detained in reaching your house, or the train may be later than scheduled, and therefore I might miss you. The president

will reach Washington to-morrow on the *Mayflower* from his trip down the Chesapeake, and it is impossible for me to reach him to-night.

"I have discovered that Colombia is inciting Panama to revolt. We are not too well liked down there as it is. I have also discovered that Japan will take a hand in the game. The Island of Gorgona, in the Pacific, which belongs to a wealthy Colombian, has a magnificent harbor—the harbor of Trinidad—and it has been offered to the latter nation as a coaling station. Japan does not have to appeal to European nations to finance a war; the South Americans will provide funds. They are jealous of our growing prestige, our increasing commerce, and fear our colonization. We reached out and grasped Panama, and they think we are casting covetous glances at Mexico and other countries to the south. Japan has also been guaranteed the Philippines.

"I have commissioned Douglas Hunter, attaché of the American embassy at Tokyo, to make certain investigations. I expect to see him to-morrow, and if he has discovered anything of material value, I will bring him with me to the state department at once.

"In making these researches, I find perfidy and dishonor exist in an astounding quarter. Government secrets are being betrayed by a paid spy and traitor—Dana Thornton—"

A chair was dashed aside, and, before any one could move, Colonel Thornton had thrown open the hall door and disappeared. So totally unexpected was the dénouement that the others sat too stunned to move, and that moment's respite gave Thornton his chance. The roar of a motor broke the spell, and the men, galvanized into sudden action, raced to the front door, just in time to see Eleanor's powerful car far down the street, with Colonel Thornton at the wheel. He turned the machine into Wisconsin Avenue, and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PURSUIT.

"Take my car!" called the secretary of state, as Brett and Douglas started up the street on a run. They turned and rejoined the secretary as the latter's chauffeur, attracted by the disturbance, hastened out of the garden where he had gone to get a glass of water.

The three men sprang into the machine, and in a few seconds were off.

They swung into Wisconsin Avenue, and sped on up that thoroughfare. The avenue was almost deserted at that hour, and the quiet was broken only by the whirl of their car as it gained headway. Far in the distance they could descry Thornton's motor, and, in obedience to Brett's order, their chauffeur increased his speed.

On and on they went. A bicycle policeman shouted at them as they whizzed by, and, clambering on his machine, started in pursuit. They passed a crowded trolley car, and the passengers stared at their mad speed. They reached the outskirts of Georgetown and the more open country beyond. They gained on the car ahead of them, and Brett shouted aloud with the joy of the chase as they drew nearer. They passed the Naval Observatory, cut across Massachusetts Avenue extended, just shaving several other automobiles, the startled drivers of which wasted their breath in sending endless curses after them. They swept past the cathedral close, and continued their race along the Rockville Pike.

As they approached the River Road, they saw Thornton turn his car, scarcely reducing his speed, and cut across the road. It was a dangerous corner at any time, and, as the front wheels made the turn, the body of the car slewed around. There was a grinding, splintering crash as the car struck one of the tall poles supporting the overhead trolley wires, and the big machine turned turtle.

Brett's chauffeur put on a final burst of speed, and the limousine leaped madly down the road. A cry of horror broke from the three men as a tongue of flame shot up from the overturned car ahead of them.

"By heavens! The gasoline has ignited!" gasped Douglas.

He was on the running board as the car slowed down near Thornton's motor. It was a mass of flames. Douglas sprang to the ground, and the others followed him.

"Get some fence rails," he directed. "We must try and lift the car so that Thornton can crawl out."

In a few minutes the men were back with boards torn from a near-by fence, but in that short time the flames had gained headway, and they were driven back by the intense heat. Unfortunately, there was no loose sand at hand. An outgoing trolley car stopped, and several passengers ran to Douglas' aid. The fence boards caught fire, and had to be put out; but finally the car was raised a slight distance from the ground, and a cry of exultation broke from the toiling men, only to die into a groan as a sharp explosion, followed by a heavier detonation, rang out. Dropping their hold on the boards, the men bolted to a safe distance.

"It's hopeless," gasped Brett. "No man can live in that fiery furnace."

Douglas groaned aloud. He had been shocked beyond measure by the discovery of Thornton's guilt and treachery, for he had liked him, and had accepted his hospitality. It was horrible to see him meet such a fate. Better the electric chair than being roasted alive.

"Perhaps he jumped from the car before it turned turtle," he suggested.

"It's hardly likely," answered Brett dubiously. "Still, we might look along the road. We can do no good over there." He shuddered slightly as he turned to look at the still burning car. The steel and metal work had been twisted into grotesque shapes by the great heat, which added to the ghastly picture.

Their search along the roadside was fruitless, and Douglas and Brett returned to the secretary of state's limousine. They had to wait some time before the flames about the remains of Thornton's car died down into a smoldering mass. After the fire had burned itself out, Brett, with the assistance of horror-stricken spectators among the crowd which had collected with the Aladdinlike magic that characterizes street gatherings, examined the ground with minute care. Suddenly he moved over to where Douglas was standing keeping back the curious crowd, and beckoned him to one side.

"Colonel Thornton did not jump

from the car, Mr. Hunter," he said gravely. "We've just found all that's left of him—his ashes."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE END OF THE QUEST.

"And so that was his end!" Eleanor drew a long, shuddering breath. "Poor Uncle Dana! Douglas, do you really think he was guilty?"

"I'm afraid so," sorrowfully. "The very fact that he was trying to escape proves it; otherwise, he would have stayed here and faced an investigation."

"It's dreadful, dreadful!" moaned Eleanor. "And almost unbelievable. A traitor! A murderer! But"—checking herself—"that last hasn't been proved."

"That's Brett's voice," exclaimed Douglas, springing from his chair and crossing to the hall door. "Come in, Brett. Miss Thornton and I are sitting in the library."

The detective gave his hat and light overcoat to Nicodemus and followed Douglas back into the room, first closing the door carefully behind him.

"Has Captain Lane been here yet?" he inquired.

"Yes, he came over at once on being released. Mrs. Truxton took him upstairs to see Cynthia, who is rapidly improving, now that the mystery of Senator Carew's death is solved and Fred cleared of any complicity in it," explained Eleanor.

"Then would you mind asking Captain Lane to come down, Miss Thornton? I have several pieces of news that I must tell you, and I think his presence is necessary." Eleanor looked at him questioningly, and he added hastily: "He won't be involved in any further trouble."

"What tragedies have happened since I reached this house twenty-four hours ago!" exclaimed Douglas, pacing the room restlessly. "Annette's death last night, and now the colonel—" He did not finish this sentence, but, instead, stopped before the full-length portrait of a dead-and-gone Thornton, and gazed moodily at the painted face.

From that gallant naval hero to Dana Thornton, traitor, was indeed a great descent. "A good man gone wrong," he commented finally.

"An accomplished scoundrel," growled Brett. He stopped speaking as Eleanor reentered the room followed by Fred Lane. The young officer showed the ordeal he had gone through that morning and afternoon by the deep lines under his eyes and around his mouth. He bowed curtly to Douglas and Brett.

"You wish to see me?" he asked.

"Sit down, please." Brett pushed forward a chair for Eleanor, and the others grouped themselves about the center table. By common consent they all avoided Colonel Thornton's favorite armchair. "I am anxious to have a talk with you, because there are several loose threads to this mystery that must be straightened out."

"What are they?" questioned Lane impatiently; he longed to be back with Cynthia.

"On my return from the River Road to headquarters, I found an answer from the Paris police to my cable. They tell me, Miss Thornton, that your maid, Annette, was an international spy."

"Great heavens!" ejaculated Eleanor, in round-eyed astonishment.

"She was also in the habit of impersonating you." Eleanor's face was a study. "She had clothes made exactly like yours; even her kimono was a duplicate. From what I hear, Mr. Hunter, I judge Annette, who, you recollect, was in the hall when we were discussing the mysterious letter written by Senator Carew, decided to try to find it, and that's why she paid you a visit in the library last Tuesday night. She did not know that I had asked you to sleep there."

"I was grossly deceived in her," declared Eleanor bitterly. "I presume her splendid recommendations were —"

"Forgeries," supplemented Brett. "Quite right; they must have been. I have just talked with one of the nurses from Providence Hospital who attended Philip Winthrop, and he de-

clares that he caught Annette trying to give Philip a sleeping powder. Probably she wished to reap all the reward that she could, through blackmail and otherwise, and was afraid if Philip saw me that he would spoil her 'scoop.' With her usual habit of involving you, Miss Thornton, she made that crazy fool believe you were drugging him."

"Will you please explain to me," broke in Fred Lane, "why Mrs. Winthrop swore out a warrant for my arrest? What led her to believe me guilty?"

"Mrs. Winthrop wished me to tell you, Captain Lane, that she bitterly regrets her hasty action. I never saw any one so completely broken up. It seems she wanted that graceless stepson of hers to marry her niece, Miss Carew, so that he would eventually inherit the Carew fortune. Then she has a natural antipathy for you because you are your father's son, and she was, unfortunately, only too ready to believe you guilty. Annette told her a number of lies"—Brett shrugged his shoulders expressively—"and there you have it—along with other circumstantial evidence, which would have pretty nearly convicted you."

Lane flushed angrily. "So Mrs. Winthrop took the word of a worthless servant, the better to humiliate me——"

"Had Annette no grounds for her accusation?" questioned Brett swiftly. "Mrs. Owen said her library desk file mysteriously disappeared the night of the dance."

"A coincidence that I cannot account for," declared Lane, looking the detective squarely in the eye. "It may be that Annette saw the end of my silver-handled umbrella which I was carrying, and in the uncertain light mistook it for a weapon of some sort."

"Considering Annette's natural disposition to lie," broke in Douglas, "I think it highly probable that she made up the story, and told it to Miss Carew."

"And probably promised to keep silent if Miss Carew paid her," suggested Brett scornfully. "It's too bad Miss

Carew permitted the maid to blackmail her."

"What about the threatening letters to Senator Carew, which Mrs. Winthrop thought I sent?" inquired Lane.

"Philip Winthrop wrote them."

"The miserable scoundrel!" ejaculated Lane.

"He was that and more. The secretary of state and I took him back home in the former's motor, and when we had done grilling him, we had cleared up many details in regard to this international intrigue. Through Senator Carew's letter and Winthrop's disclosures, the intrigue has been nipped in the bud before more serious results can happen."

"Thank God for that!" exclaimed Douglas devoutly.

"It seems that Philip Winthrop has been a go-between for a wealthy Colombian, whose name he obstinately withholds, and some person whom the conspirators called 'our mutual friend.' Strange to say, Philip declares he never knew until Carew's letter was read that the mysterious individual was Colonel Dana Thornton. He says he gave all communications for the 'mutual friend' to Annette, and Annette, if you please, made him believe that the spy was—Miss Thornton."

"Well, upon my word!" cried Eleanor, her eyes blazing with indignation. "I was a nice cat's-paw for her! Do you know, I believe she killed Senator Carew, and not my uncle."

"I'm sorry——" Brett hesitated, then went on slowly: "I'm sorry to say there's no doubt but that Colonel Thornton did murder the senator. I don't want to inflict any more pain than necessary, Miss Thornton, but you will hear the details from others if not from me. I have seen Soto, your Japanese cook, and he swore that Colonel Thornton called at your house on Monday night just after the senator's arrival, and Fugi admitted him. On being informed that Senator Carew was with you, your uncle told the butler not to announce him, but that he would wait in the writing room until the senator left. Soto showed me an umbrella that

Fugi had carried to the kitchen to dry for the colonel. It has your uncle's initials engraved on the handle, and Nicodemus positively identified it as belonging to the colonel when I showed it to him on my arrival here just now.

"On being pressed, Soto also admitted that late Monday night he left your house to post a letter. As he came up the area steps to the terraced walk—which was covered by the awning—leading from the house to the sidewalk, he almost collided with Senator Carew, who seemed buried in thought and did not notice his approach. Soto drew back respectfully toward the area steps to let him pass. As the senator entered his carriage, another man sped down your high front steps, and, on reaching the carriage, pulled open the door and entered the vehicle, which then moved on. Soto swears solemnly that this last man was Colonel Thornton."

Eleanor drew a long, sobbing breath, and glanced helplessly at the others. Her worst fears were realized. Her uncle was not only a traitor, but a murderer. None cared to break the pause, and, after waiting a moment, Brett took up his narrative where he had left off.

"It must be, Miss Thornton, that your uncle overheard all or part of your conversation with the senator. He probably waited in the writing room until the senator left the house, picked up the letter file, as he had no other weapon handy, and stole after the senator. Hamilton was too drunk to notice anything. The horses probably moved up the street of their own accord when the preceding carriages made room for them to advance. It was unpremeditated murder, and yet chance concealed Colonel Thornton's tracks most successfully."

"You are right," agreed Douglas. "If Annette had found Carew's letter to the secretary of state instead of Mrs. Truxton, Thornton would have escaped detection."

"Annette was always complaining of Mrs. Truxton's early rising." Eleanor laughed hysterically, then cried a little.

"My darling, let me get you some wine," exclaimed Douglas in distress.

"No, no, sit down." Eleanor clutched his coat. "Don't pay any attention to me; I'll be all right in a minute."

"Fugi has disappeared," went on Brett, after a brief silence. "I think he overheard our conversation here this afternoon, for Nicodemus says he was loitering in the hall. On searching your house, Miss Thornton, I found certain papers which prove Fugi had been in your uncle's pay."

"He thought it wiser to bolt," commented Fred Lane. "I have no doubt he knew more of affairs than we are giving him credit for."

"It's a great pity, Miss Thornton, that you kept silent so long," said Brett. "If I had known that Senator Carew spent the evening with you, and also about the awning, I would have cleared up this mystery sooner."

"I should have spoken." Eleanor looked so troubled that Douglas sat down on the arm of her chair and took her hand gently in his. As his strong grasp tightened, she formed a sudden resolution. "There is another reason for my silence which I have not told you. Wait a moment," and she rose and hurriedly left the room.

The men smoked in silence until her return. "The room is very dark; won't you light another burner, Douglas?" she asked, on her return. She waited until her wish had been complied with; then, as the men seated themselves near her, she began her story.

"On Tuesday morning, just after I had heard of Senator Carew's death, I received a cardboard box containing jewels. That in itself bewildered me, but I was astounded by the message, written in an unknown hand, that I found on a card inside the box." As she spoke, she opened the small box that she had just brought into the room with her. "Here is the card; read the message aloud, Douglas."

"The appointment was not kept. Well done."

Douglas laid the card on the desk, and the three men looked at each other in amazement.



"These are the Hemmingway rubies," went on Brett. "They were stolen about a month ago in New York, and the police of this country and Europe were notified of their loss."

"The message frightened me horribly," continued Eleanor. "I realized that some one must have thought me guilty of the senator's death—and *ap-proved* of it. The mystery of it appalled

me. I did not know whom to take into my confidence; so I put the jewels into my strong box and said nothing, hoping that I would be able to ferret out the mystery by myself."

"Let us see the jewels," suggested Douglas.

Eleanor opened the box and pulled off the top layer of cotton, then rolled the necklace of rubies on the table, where the stones lay glittering under the strong light.

"They are superb!" exclaimed Douglas, while a low murmur of admiration broke from Lane.

"Their almost priceless value frightened me more than anything else," explained Eleanor. "I could not imagine who had sent them to me——"

"That's easily answered." Brett picked up the necklace and examined it minutely. "This necklace was sent to you by the man who stole it."

"What?" ejaculated the two men, while Eleanor collapsed limply in her chair.

"These are the Hemmingway rubies," went on Brett. "They were stolen about a month ago in New York, and the police of this country and Europe were notified of their loss. I have here," drawing out a leather wallet and extracting a thin, typewritten sheet, "one of the notices sent to headquarters. Let me refresh my memory." He skimmed over the lines, then a shout of exultation escaped him. "Listen:

"Mrs. Hemmingway was entertaining a house party at the time of the theft. Among her guests were Mr. and Mrs. Henry St. John, of Philadelphia; Miss Snyder, of Chicago; Colonel Dana Thornton, of Washington——"

"Oh, no, no!" Eleanor cried, throwing out her arms as if to thrust the idea from her; then she dropped forward and buried her head in her arms on the table.

Douglas started to move over to her side, but Brett checked him. "Let her alone," he advised, in an undertone. "It's a shock, but she will recover." Then, in a louder tone: "By heavens! That man was a positive genius!" with reluctant admiration. "He probably heard that the case had been turned over to the police, although the Hemmingways had asked to have the search conducted quietly, so that it did not reach the papers. Fearing to keep the

necklace in his possession, he sent it to his niece with a cryptic message which he knew she would not, under the circumstances, dare show to others, reasoning also that she would keep the necklace concealed for the same cause. I don't doubt he expected her eventually to ask his advice about the jewels, and then he would get them back again, as soon as all danger of detection was over, on the plea that he would have them returned to the rightful owner, or some such plausible excuse."

"Upon my word, such villainy exceeds belief!" Lane gazed incredulously at the detective. "And yet I don't doubt you have guessed the right solution of the problem."

"Eleanor, dear"—Douglas turned to the weeping girl—"if you feel strong enough, I wish you would tell us about the quest to which you alluded this afternoon." Eleanor raised her head and looked reproachfully at him. "I realize the subject may prove painful to you at this time, but Annette having implicated you in her transactions, I think it is best for you to clear up any seeming mysteries."

"Perhaps you are right." Eleanor sighed as she wiped away her tears. "I must first tell you that my mother was Nora Fitzgerald——"

"The famous actress?" broke in Brett.

"The same. She gave up the stage when she married my father, Barry Thornton, then a lieutenant in the United States navy. Their married life was unusually happy; therefore it was all the more incredible and tragic when, one day, he disappeared——"

"Disappeared?" echoed Douglas blankly.

"Disappeared utterly. His ship was at Hampton Roads, and he was given shore leave one day. At the wharf he told the coxswain to come back for him at ten o'clock that evening, and he walked on up to the hotel. From that hour to this, he has never been seen or heard from." Eleanor paused and pushed her hair off her forehead, then continued: "A short time before his mysterious disappearance my father

fell from the rigging of the ship to the deck with such force that he was picked up unconscious. It is supposed that the fall may have affected his brain, and so account for his subsequent disappearance."

"That is very likely," commented Lane. "I saw a similar case in the Philippines. But pardon me, Miss Eleanor; I did not mean to interrupt."

"Several days after my father's disappearance, a nude body was washed ashore miles below Norfolk. The condition of the body prevented positive identification, but many persons, among them Uncle Dana, believed it to be my father. My mother, however, refused to accept that theory. She was convinced that he was still alive and suffering from mental aberration. She returned to the stage, first placing me with my uncle, John Fitzgerald, who brought me up. She visited many cities and many countries, but could find no trace of my father. Shortly before her death, she sent for me and charged me solemnly to continue her search, which I have done to the best of my ability."

"My poor girl!" said Douglas softly.

"My idea has been that if my father was still alive, he would pursue his profession; so I have searched the records of other navies, thinking that perhaps he might be serving under another flag. The day that you saw me at the navy department, Douglas, I had been going over old records, hoping to find some clew to his present whereabouts."

Douglas colored hotly as he remembered the construction that he had put on her presence in the department. "What did you mean," he asked, "by saying this afternoon that Senator Carew told you he could help you to bring your mission to a successful conclusion?"

"Senator Carew said that, while in Panama, he had seen a man who closely resembled my father. The stranger apparently did not recognize him, but so certain was Senator Carew of his identity that he gave him his visiting card, and insisted that he should call at the navy department in Washington. Doug-

las, do you recollect asking me about a man whom you thought you saw with me in the elevator at the navy department on Wednesday?"

"I do."

"I was terribly excited by your apparently simple question, for in stating that the man had black hair and blue eyes, you exactly described my father."

"Great heavens!" Douglas sprang to his feet. "It is most astounding, but such a man as you describe really did call at the department that morning, and insisted on seeing the secretary, saying that he had an appointment to meet Senator Carew."

"What became of him?" Eleanor's lovely eyes were aglow with excitement.

"I don't know. The secretary and I both thought he had stolen the plans of the battleships." Eleanor's shocked expression stopped him. "Of course, now we know it was Colonel Thornton who called there later with you and Mrs. Wyndham; although how on earth he managed to steal the plans under the very nose of the secretary is beyond me."

"Let me think." Eleanor pressed her hands to her throbbing temples. "I remember now; it must have been when Uncle Dana was using the desk telephone. He was leaning forward across the desk, and I recall that I noticed he had his right hand in a drawer. I couldn't see very distinctly, as his body was between us and the drawer, and his overcoat also lay on the desk. Mrs. Wyndham was looking at a book, and the secretary was coughing his head off by the farther window, with his back toward us."

Brett struck the table a resounding blow with his clenched fists.

"By George, but he was slick! The smartest criminal I've run across in years!"

A discreet tap sounded on the library door, and a muffled voice asked: "'Scuse me, but am Miss Eleanor in dar?"

"Come in, Nicodemus," called Eleanor. The old darky entered, and, circling the table, handed her a note

on the silver salver. She hastily tore it open and read its contents. "I must consult Cousin Kate," she announced, rising hastily, "before I can answer this."

"We must all be going," said Brett, following her into the hall, while Nicodemus paused to put out the lights. "One moment, Miss Thornton, will you please give me the ruby necklace?"

"Why, I handed it to you!" ejaculated Eleanor in surprise, turning back from the staircase.

"I beg your pardon," said Brett, with positiveness. "I saw Mr. Hunter drop it on the table in front of you."

Douglas and the young officer joined them.

"So he did," declared Lane, and with the others followed Eleanor as she hastily reentered the library.

"Why, it's not anywhere on the table." Eleanor felt among the table ornaments. "Douglas, do light the gas," in growing alarm.

"Where in thunder are the matches?" growled Douglas, overturning a vase in his endeavor to find a match box. "Got any, Nicodemus?" as a figure brushed by him in the darkness, and approached the chimney. The other men were searching vainly in their pockets for a match.

"Good for you, Nicodemus," called Douglas, as a tiny flame appeared in the direction of the chimney. "Bring it over here and light this chandelier." His order was not obeyed.

The flickering light grew stronger, and then Douglas realized that it was burning some distance from the servant. The flame became stronger, and by its rays a face grew out of the surrounding darkness; a strong, handsome face, whose pallor was enhanced by the heavy black beard and dark, shaggy eyebrows. The eyes were fixed on Nicodemus, who stood in the shadow with his back to the rest, and the two stared unblinkingly at each other. The silence was intolerable. Eleanor and the three men stood transfixed, too astounded to move. Suddenly a choking sob burst from Nicodemus. He threw

out his arms as if to ward off some overmastering horror, swayed forward, and fell heavily to the floor.

The candle flickered suddenly, as it was raised and applied to a wall gas jet. The sudden light caused the spell-bound spectators of the scene to blink violently; then, as their eyes grew accustomed to the illumination, they made out the figure of a tall man, in nondescript clothes, standing near the chimney.

"Who—who are you, and where in hell did you come from?" gasped Brett.

"I am Barry Thornton, formerly of the United States navy." The newcomer caught sight of Eleanor, and stretched out his arms pleadingly. "My dear, dear daughter!"

Eleanor, grown deadly white, clutched the table for support. "I don't understand," she stammered.

"I forgot." The newcomer's arms dropped to his side. "You were too young to remember me when I last saw you. Fortunately," meeting Brett's incredulous start, "Nicodemus knows me."

"Your spectacular appearance seems to have knocked him silly," exclaimed Captain Lane, regaining his voice. "I reckon we'll have to bring him around before he can identify you properly."

"Nicodemus, tell these gentlemen who I am," commanded the newcomer.

"Yo' is my marster, Cap'n Barry Thornton, suh." The voice came from behind Douglas, and all in the room wheeled in that direction. There stood Nicodemus, his eyes starting from his head, his face gray with fright. He had entered unnoticed a second before.

Eleanor's senses were reeling. With desperate effort she controlled herself. "Then who is that?" she cried frantically, pointing to the motionless figure that was partly hidden from their view by the divan.

For answer the newcomer stepped forward and thrust the sofa to one side, then stooped and rolled the figure over, disclosing the white hair and well-known features of Colonel Dana Thornton.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FINAL EXPLANATION.

Douglas caught Eleanor as she fell, and carried her to the lounge.

"Get some water and wine, Lane," he directed, and the young officer sped out of the room, to return quickly with Nicodemus, bearing the necessary articles. Douglas forced some of the stimulant between Eleanor's clenched teeth, and bathed her temples and hands with the iced water, and, to his infinite relief, he had the satisfaction of seeing her open her eyes.

"Father," she murmured. "Father."

"I am here." The tall, sad-faced man stooped over her, and she placed her trembling hand against his cheek. "Don't look so wild, my darling," as recollection returned fully to her. "Think no more of it," and he laid his hand softly over her eyes.

She smiled like a tired child, and, reaching over, laid her hand in Douglas'; then reassured, lay still. Seen together, the likeness between father and daughter was obvious. Eleanor had inherited his handsome, deep-blue eyes, long eyelashes, and brilliant coloring.

Brett rose from beside the still figure. "He's dead—this time," he said tersely. "Apoplexy. It beats me how he got out of that burning automobile."

"He wasn't in it," said Barry Thornton calmly.

"He wasn't?" Brett's excitement overcame him. "Why, I saw him with my own eyes."

"You saw him leave here, yes; but you probably did not notice that the Japanese chauffeur was crouching at his feet in the car. When the machine turned into Wisconsin Avenue out of your sight, my brother slowed down and sprang out, giving his hat to the Japanese, who took his place at the wheel and raced the machine up Wisconsin Avenue."

"Well, I'll be damned!" ejaculated Brett. "So it was poor Fugi who was burned up! But good Lord! When Colonel Thornton had made so successful a get-away, what induced him to put his head in the lion's mouth by re-

turning here, and what was he doing in this room?"

"If you search his pockets, you may find out," was the cryptic reply, as Barry Thornton drew up a chair by Eleanor's couch and seated himself.

Brett thrust his hand first in one pocket of the dead man's clothing, and then in another. Feeling in the last one, he jerked it out again, as if his fingers had been bitten. In his hand dangled the priceless ruby necklace and a wallet filled with bank notes. Brett sat down on the floor, for once speechless.

"How did you know it?" he asked finally.

Barry Thornton raised his disengaged hand and pointed to the portrait of his ancestor and namesake. "I was watching this scene through those peep-holes." An exclamation escaped Douglas. "You almost caught me this morning, Mr. Hunter. This old house is honeycombed with secret passages. My brother kept a large sum of money in a secret drawer in that desk. He probably needed funds to assist him in escaping from this country, so came back here and entered the house by means of one of the secret passages. He has been concealed behind that sliding panel"—pointing to an aperture in the wall near the chimney—"waiting to slip into this room. He seized the opportunity when Nicodemus put out the lights and left by the billiard-room door, to steal the necklace as well as get his money. Your reëntering the room flustered him, and he was making in haste for the secret passage when I stepped out of it and faced him. Thinking me dead years ago—his escape barred—the shock proved too much for—"

Thornton did not complete his sentence. There was a moment's silence.

"I think it would be as well Mr. Thornton, that we remove your brother's body to his room," suggested Douglas, recovering somewhat from his astonishment.

"Well, I don't know about that; the coroner—" objected Brett dubiously.

"We can all testify to the details of

Colonel Thornton's death," put in Lane. "But we cannot leave him lying here on his own floor. His death was natural, brought on by shock."

"Very well, sir," Brett rose and walked to the door. He returned in a moment with the plain-clothes policeman; and, with the assistance of Douglas and Lane, all that was mortal of Dana Thornton was carried to his room. Barry Thornton had requested them to return, and Douglas, Lane, and Brett trooped back to the library.

"Eleanor has told me of her long search," began Thornton. "My disappearance came from lapse of memory, and the latter was brought on by a fall on shipboard. That fall," deliberately, "was caused by my brother Dana."

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Eleanor.

"Yes, I had found out some of his deviltries and taxed him with them. I told him I would expose him if he did not mend his ways, and he promised to do so. He visited me on board ship, and, while he was there, I had occasion to mount the rigging. He followed me up, and managed to push me as I was swinging from one of the ropes. I lost my balance and fell, with what result you already know."

"The fiend!" cried Eleanor bitterly. "And I trusted him so!"

"His ability to inspire confidence has been his greatest asset," said her father dryly. "After leaving the gig that day at Old Point Comfort, everything is a blank to me."

"What brought back your memory?" asked Douglas.

"A chance remark overheard in a drinking hell of Colon, Panama. Two days before that, a man whose face was dimly familiar met me in the streets of Cristobal and gave me his card, telling me that I must ask for him at the navy department at Washington, and that the secretary was keeping a place open for me. At the time, while his words impressed me deeply, they conveyed no very clear idea, nor did Senator Carew's name enlighten me; but they caused me to renew my efforts to remember the past, which I felt convinced was very different from my surroundings then.

"As I have said, two days afterward I overheard two men plotting against the United States. Toward the end of their conversation, the younger man, whom I took to be an American, mentioned the name that woke the sleeping chords of memory—the name of my dearly loved wife, Nora Fitzgerald." His voice broke with a sob. Eleanor raised his hand and kissed it tenderly.

"I hastened back to Washington as soon as I could get here, working my passage, and, on my arrival, went to see Secretary Wyndham. The news of Senator Carew's death was a great shock, for I had depended on him to assist me to find my wife and child. I believe I had some sort of attack at the department, but all I recollect is finding myself again in the street.

"I came on here, thinking I might find Dana. He was out, but old Nicodemus opened the door for me. He recognized me almost instantly, hurried me out into the kitchen, and there poured out such a tale of Dana's behavior that I sat dumfounded."

"Do tell us what he said?" urged Brett, hitching his chair forward.

"In justice to myself, I must," was the grave reply. "Dana was a moral degenerate; brave to a fault and very clever, he did not know the difference between right and wrong. If he had been content to keep straight, he might have risen to high places; instead, he practiced deceit and dishonor." Thornton's sad face hardened. "He was always a first-class actor, and that talent helped him in the double life he was leading. Nicodemus told me that he was in the habit of disguising himself whenever he was up to devilry."

"Ah, that explains why Annette did not know that Dana Thornton was 'the mutual friend,' to whom she delivered and received secret dispatches," put in Brett, who had followed Thornton's words with breathless interest.

"After what Nicodemus told me, I decided not to let my brother know of my presence here," continued Captain Thornton, "and so occupied an unused room in the garret, where Nicodemus took care of me."

"Oh, why didn't you come to me?" asked Eleanor passionately.

"I did, dear; yesterday morning, but you were out. Nicodemus told me of my wife's death, and of your presence in Washington, Eleanor.

"How I kept my hands off Dana, I don't know." Thornton's eyes blazed with righteous indignation. "He was the cause of all my misfortunes. I entered this room just now, intending to slay him, but Providence intervened and gave him a more merciful death than I would have meted out to him."

"I don't know about that," said Brett. "In the hour of his triumph, you snatched his victory from him. God only knows what thoughts were concentrated in his active brain when physical endurance succumbed to the shock of seeing you."

"Perhaps you are right," agreed Thornton wearily. "I think that's all I have to tell you, gentlemen."

"There is one question I feel I must ask." Brett rose to his feet as he spoke. "Did Annette commit suicide, or was she killed by human or supernatural agency?"

"I think my brother planned her murder; one crime more or less would not trouble his elastic conscience."

"By Heaven! She brought it on herself by offering to confess to Colonel Thornton what she knew of Senator Carew's murder. But how the devil did he accomplish it?" questioned Brett. "The only door was locked on the inside. I examined all the wall space, thinking there might be a concealed entrance, but couldn't find a sign of one."

"But you did not examine the floor of the closet," replied Thornton. "It has a trapdoor cleverly concealed. The passage leads to a secret door that opens on the landing of the staircase leading from this floor to the next. My idea is that Dana stole into the room, found the maid asleep, and blew out the gas, leaving her to be asphyxiated, and then returned to his room."

"Did you see him do this?" sternly.

"Most certainly not! If I had had the faintest idea that he intended to murder the maid, I should have prevented the crime. I stayed downstairs last night, going over some papers in Dana's desk until nearly three this morning. I was stealing up to my room when I saw Miss Carew coming down the hall, and when she screamed I bolted into the secret passage opening from the stair landing."

"I am exceedingly obliged to you, sir, for straightening out these mysteries," said Brett, stepping to the door. "How much do you wish made public?"

"Only that which is absolutely necessary to clear the innocent from suspicion," returned Thornton gravely. "I leave the matter to your judgment."

"Very good, sir; I'll hush it up as much as possible. Good evening," and Brett departed.

Eleanor slipped from the lounge. "Wait for me here, father," she requested, as she left the room.

"Will you excuse me, Mr. Thornton?" said Fred Lane, rising. "I would like to join Mrs. Truxton and Cynthia."

"Certainly, captain, and I will be exceedingly grateful if you will explain things to Mrs. Truxton."

"I will indeed, sir; good night."

Eleanor was not long absent. Walking over to the lounge, she laid a number of leather-bound journals on her father's knee.

"Mother kept a diary for you, father. She charged me never to part with it until we should meet, when I was to give it to you."

Thornton kissed her in silence. As Eleanor stood hesitating, Douglas' arm stole round her waist. "Come with me, dear heart," he murmured. Together they strolled to the door; but Eleanor paused and glanced back at her father.

Thornton's iron composure had given way, and his head was bowed over the familiar handwriting, as he read through tear-dimmed eyes the messages of love and faith penned by his girl wife in the years that were gone.

AUNT HEPSEY'S HEATHEN

by WINIFRED ARNOLD



Author of "Little Merry Christmas," "Mrs. Radigan's Picnic," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. ENNETT OWEN

IF there's any one thing more than another that you've said you wouldn't never be ketched doing, that's the one you're aiming straight for that minute, sure as preaching. I've noticed it time and again, and so has Si, and yet we all on us keep right on a-tempting Providence by making our brags. I done it for years about summer boarders; said the one place where I drove my stub was on sozzling around after city folks, and taking their back talk about whether my hens wrote the time of day on the eggs when they laid 'em, and the cows was guaranteed to give nothing but solid cream, and took a bath every Saturday night. But land or Goshen! if I'd had the sense of an infant babe, I'd 'a' kept the spare-room bed aired and waiting agin' the time Providence got ready to send 'em.

It begun kind of roundabout, the way things does, with Elder Pease being took sick with slow fever and spending the whole summer to his married daughter's in Tewksbury, and our having a young minister down from Boston for a supply. It beats all how took up that young feller was with missions and "the heathen in their blindness."

I've always thought I was as much interested in 'em as any professor had a call to be, seeing as I went to the Ladies' Mission Circle regular and give five cents every once in a while when the plate was passed. But that young minister—lawsy me!—you'd 'a' s'posed his ma was a heathen Chinese and his

sisters and aunts little Hinders, to say nothing of a Hottentot pa, he discoursed so moving about the things they needed, and the sufferings they suffered, and the lives they led.

I'd heard other ministers talk for hours on how far even a few cents would go in furrin parts, and the slews of heathens one good tract would convert, but—mercy me!—this feller didn't want cents—neither common nor copper. He as much as said that five cents wa'n't a circumstance; he wanted dollars, and dollar bills don't lay around the streets in Hicksville Center, nor grow on the bushes in folkses front yards, as some thinks they do down to York and Boston.

We womenfolks seemed to take it harder than the men did, some ways. Take Si, now; he relished his vittles jest as hearty wh'n I was a-talking about them starving millions. And that was unfortunite, for womenfolkses giving has to be kind of small potatoes—half the egg money, or a third of the butter, and such—and our whole circle couldn't see their way clear to raise but eight dollars and thirteen cents, all told.

Mis' Deacon Blodgett and Aunt Sophy Pierce and Elvine Skinner—she that was a Higgins—bust right out crying at the circle meeting to my house the last of June, when this report was made, for we'd lotted on twenty dollars, anyhow. But I riz right up on my feet and I says:

"Waal, sisters and ladies," says I

"we've give our cents and what few dollars we could lay our hands onto; now's the time to give our druthers, according to my way of thinking. My druthers has always been not to take summer boarders, but I s'pose I can do that better than them heathen can stand what they have to put up with; so here goes. I'll have Emeline stick up a notice in the post office to-morrow morning."

Providence was just a-waiting for me to give in, I guess, for even before the notice was up, the boarder come—got off the seven o'clock train Thursday morning and asked Tom Martin where she could get the best board in the village. And Tom Martin, not sensing that he was an instrument in the hands of Providence, sent her to me; said he wouldn't 'a' felt justified telling her no different. He's real truthful, Tom Martin is; always was.

I suspicioned what she come for as soon as I seen her a-standing on the front steps, 'stead of coming round to the side entry, folksylike. And land! I dunno as I should ever have got to the door if Duty hadn't 'a' stand behind me and shoved.

I put my price up scandalous, too, hoping she'd refuse, though I pretended in one side of my mind that I done it to get more money for the heathen. But land! she didn't stagger no more at the idee of five dollars and a half than I should at five and a half cents.

"Thank you," says she; "thank you so much!" and scooted right into the front entry and set down her hand satchel quicker'n scat. And then, of course, there wa'n't no way out of it.

Si hadn't took to the idee at all, seeing's we had just moved in from the farm and settled down to take comfort in the neatest little white cottage house you ever see; besides him being, as he said, heathen enough to keep my hands full if I attended to my job proper. But land! Marjorie Miner—that was her name—hadn't been in the house overnight before we both on us forgot all about boarders and cottoned to her so fast you could fairly hear our minds flop.

She was a little pink-and-white posy,

almost the "spittin' image" of Hitty May, and it was "Aunt Hepsy," and "Uncle Si," and us a-calling of her "Marjie" before you could say Jack Robinson. She was an art student, she said, and she'd come to Hicksville Center because it was so picturesque. So Si, he wanted to traipse her round to all the paster lands and laneways to find something for her to sketch, as she called it. But she wouldn't stir a step for a while; just set right down in our back yard and painted the row of pinies against the side fence, and a dab of blue paint, that she called *me*, a-setting on the back steps a-shelling peas.

Talk about sozzling round after folks! I pampered that child up as I wouldn't never 'a' dasted to do my own, a-shelling peas stiddy till my thumb nail was wore to the quick, and even the pig acted as if he loathed the sight of the pods when I throwed 'em in; to say nothing of the vittles I cooked up for her, all cream and butter and things. I felt justified, for wa'n't she just a-rolling up money for the heathen, five dollars and fifty cents every Saturday night?

She wouldn't hardly go anywheres with me, though, even to meeting, and it worried me a sight. So finally I up and told her about our young minister, and how moving he discoursed about missions—hoping to toll her along that way—and how I'd took her to raise my mission money. I la'nched out so high and eloquent about that young elder that it would 'a' took most girls over to the meetinghouse on the dead run, but land, no, not Marjie. She just said she hated to meet new folks some ways, and begun to laugh fit to kill about her being a heathen come to my door. "Aunt Hepsy's heathen," she called herself, and she cut on like a house afire, pretending she was a Chinnee with her feet all tied round with rags, or a cannibal chief getting ready to eat me up. It was wicked, of course—awful—but you couldn't help but laugh; so she kept on a-doing it, to tickle Si, every once in a while.

She came hobbling into the fore room one day in her Chinnee thingamajig, not

knowing that the minister was there, and land! she looked so scared that I guess she thought he was the cannibal chief that time. He took it all in good part, though, for even elders is men-folks first and ministers afterward, and she looked as pretty as a picter in her pink rig and her black hair. And before I knew it, he'd made her promise to come down and dress up for him at the missionary social; said he had a lot of things they wore in furrin parts that he'd lend her. I was surprised that she went, after all she'd said, though mercy! I'm old enough not to be surprised at nothing, and especially the unexpected. And I was glad enough to have her, anyhow.

There was them that thought 'twas scandalous and play acting like to have her dress up that way, but it made the heathen seem lots more living to me anyhow; and when she was a little wider from Injy, with her funny clothes and her big, sad eyes, I could 'a' cried a stream to think of what he said was going to happen to her, and I ain't no weeping willer neither.

It wa'n't very long after that before she begun a-talking to me about true love and standing by folks you cared for, and marrying of 'em no matter what folks 'said against 'em, nor how many hindrances there was in the way. Of course, I agreed to all of that; first place because I do, and second because I thought she was talking about the new minister, for he'd been a-coming around very stiddy since he'd found there was a nice heathen so handy for him to convert, and she'd gone to meetin' regular. But I couldn't think of any special hindrances in the way except the two Pierce girls and the Blodgett twins and Lowizy Parks, and a few other young females that was enjoying their gospel privileges unusual well that summer. But land! they wa'n't to be mentioned in the same day with little Marjie, so I didn't see no cause to worry.

But lawsy me! Girls certainly do beat the Dutch for contrariness and unexpectedness. No sooner had I got my mind all made up to sending out invites for another wedding, when she begun

a-acting so offish to the poor little minister that he didn't know whether he was afoot or a-horseback, and a-taking long walks off by herself, goodness knows where, though Si would have admired to tackle up old Daisy and take her from Dan to Beersheba.

It was one of them times when she was off walking that my grandson-in-law, Roscoe Conkling Perkins, stopped in on his way back to Typhoon, jest as full of percussion as ever, in one way, though in another he looked as holler as a rain barrel. So I went right out into the pantry and got him a plateful of vittles, and then we set down for a good visit. He told me all about Hitty May and the fresh baby and his new job he'd got to a five-and-ten-cent store; and then, just as I got ready to tell him about the boarder, he started out on a new track.

"Seen anything of Suzanne Carter?" says he.

"Seen who?" says I.

"Suzanne Carter," says he; "that New York girl that run away from home or was kidnaped, the twenty-fourth day of June."

"Poor little girl!" says I. "Makes me think of Charley Ross. About three or four years old, did you say?"

"Mercy, no!" says he. "A few years younger than Hitty May. Looks like her, too—slim, with dark hair. Don't nobody in Hicksville Center never read a paper, grandma? They've been full of her pictures all summer. Why, I'll bet this is the only burg in the whole United States where they hain't been on the watch for a girl in a blue suit and a big black hat with a satchel marked S. C. Say, this is the home of Rip van Winkle for fair. I've got a paper that I've took around all summer, hoping to locate her where I was enlarging and get that reward. I'll send it to you when I git home. It come out last June, but it'll be news down here."

My heart was fairly standing still in my bosom, but I brusted right up like an old ma hen that sees a hawk flying over. Roscoe Conkling is a smart young chap, and I like him full better than I'd own up to, but I don't never



She came hobbling into the fore room one day, not knowing that the minister was there.

allow nobody to run down the Center when I'm around.

"Roscoe Conkling," says I, "Hicks-ville Center always keeps right up to the times, as you ought to know full well. More than one daily paper is took in this town, I tell you. Si sees 'em again and again down to Himie Bennett's, besides our subscribing regular to the *Zion's Trumpet* and the *Weekly Plowshare*, and the *Hicksville Gazette*; but if a nice girl should 'a' happened to come here from Boston or tharabouts, we ain't so suspicious that we'd think her name was Susan Carter from New York, and she was running away from her pa. I hope the five-and-ten-cent business will give you more faith in human nater than crayon enlarging has done," says I, "or you'll go to suspecting me of being the kidnaper," says I, "though I hain't never been to that wicked-city of New York in my life, nor wouldn't if they paid my fare both ways and give me a dollar to boot."

"Whe—ew!" says Roscoe Conkling, pretending to shiver. "Say, it's cold weather in this up-to-date burg anyhow, ain't it? I guess I'd better be starting right off for Typhoon and unpack my winter overcoat. You'll be sorry when I'm dead and gone, grandma, won't you, now? Own up." And that sassy boy grabbed me round the waist and tried to kiss me while I boxed his ears.

I had to laugh, of course, he's so ridiculous acting; but I didn't put a straw in his way about going, I tell you, for I was all in a tiffick for fear Marjie'd git back or Emeline would come in before he was gone. And besides, I wanted a chance to kind of sort my ideas out quiet, though I didn't believe an earthly word of his mess, not one.

"Good-by, grandma," he sang out, as he was riding off. "Keep your eye peeled for Suzanne. I'll send the paper to-morrow."

"You'd better hustle right along," I

hollered back. "It looks sights like rain to the northard, and I want Hitty May should git that cream while 'tis fresh."

I'm ashamed to admit what I done after he was gone. I took some clean towels up to put in Marjorie's room. That sounds all right, of course, but folks don't usually hang clean towels in the clothes closet, do they? And it was there I went and hauled out her hand satchel, the one that she'd set down so quick the first day she come. One end was blank, but the other had a sort of tag pasted on it, and where one corner curled up you could see a part of a gold letter. And it never belonged to an "M" in this world; it was too curly.

I felt sick as a dog when I went downstairs and begun gitting dinner, but pretty soon in walked Si and with him Marjorie, that he'd run across up the wood lot. She looked as pretty as a picture with her pink cheeks and her brown eyes, and was as perky as a sparrow and as sassy as a blackbird, pretending that she was a little darky girl named Topsy that had come to help me dish up.

"I'm a real home mission heathen to-day, Aunt Hepsey," says she in darky talk, and she hopped around on one foot and rolled her eyes and blubbered out her lips till Si liked to keeled over into the wood box for laughing.

It seemed so good to see her like herself again, and not moping around thinking and thinking, that I just knew she couldn't be hiding nothing that she hadn't ought to, and we was all happy as clams at high water.

That same awful weight come right back again and set on my stummick the next morning, though, for along in the mail come that newspaper from Roscoe Conkling. Emeline brought it to herself when she come to dinner, but land! nothing in the world could have got me to open it afore her, though she wanted I should like a dog. I just took it and locked it up in the secretary quick as scat. She's as good as gold, my daughter-in-law Emeline is, but she'd tell her own age or about the piecings in her

best dress if 'twould be news to anybody, and that's going too fur to be natural.

After dinner I had to wait till they all got out of the house before I dasted to look at the paper, but when I did, I felt sure enough as if my stummick was full of lead. There on the front page was that Susan Carter's picture, and it did look enough like Marjie to be her own twin sister, though not quite so good looking. There was a long piece about it, of course, and I drunk in every word, bad as it hurt, till I come to the picture of her pa and a description of his feelings, and then I had to let go and boo-hoo till my best white apron looked like a mop rag.

I was so worked up that it was a long time before I even noticed the reward her pa offered for news about her—one thousand dollars! I couldn't scarcely believe my eyes. One thousand dollars! The piece had said he was a millionaire, but lawsy me! I hadn't really sensed before that even millionaires could throw money around careless like that. Why, that would convert the whole of "Injy's coral strand," likely, and leave a good slice over for "Greenland's icy mountains."

And then and there the tempter come and whispered in my ear. Wa'n't it my duty, after all, to write to Susan Carter's pa on the chance and tell him about Marjie, and earn that thousand dollars mebbe, and convert them, or Chiny, or the Philippian Islands, and stack up whole handboxes full of gold crowns for myself on the other side of Jordan?

And then I remembered how she called herself "Aunt Hepsey's own little heathen," and how she looked with her big, sad eyes in that little widdler's dress, and I turned round and scrunched him quick under my felt slipper as if he was a black beetle.

"I'd full ruther," says I, loud and clear, "go through eternity with nothing to cover my head except my prayer-meeting bunnet than go back on that little girl that's trusted me. How do I know that she's Susan Carter anyhow, and, if she is, how do I know what she

come for? Her pa may be a regular old pirate, for aught I know, though he don't look it. Mebbe he's treated her shameful, and she's a stranger, and I've took her in, and I ain't going to come a mean trick on her for no heathen living, nor gold crowns neither."

Then I see a postal that Emeline had dropped under the table, and I stepped down to the office to give it to her and git my mind off; and Emeline told me about a new essence man that was around selling awful reasonable, so I put about and traveled for home tight as I could go, for fear I'd miss him.

He was hitched out in front when I hove in sight, but Marjie had got back and was talking to him, so I felt easy in my mind and slowed down a peg or so. I knew a taking girl like that could keep any young essence man a-talking full as long as she wanted to.

But land! I wa'n't prepared for what happened. Soon as I turned up the walk, Marjie run down to meet me and stuck her hand in my arm cozylike. "This is my friend, Mr. Vincent Porter, Aunt Hepsey," says she. "He's—he's just bought this essence route, and I've ordered a lot for you. Aunt Hepsey, will you ask him to tea?"

You could 'a' laid me flat with a canary bird's eyelash. I kind of gasped, and then turned and clapped my specs onto Vincent Porter. He was a slim-mish young feller, with his hair slicked right flat off his forehead, and his collar sawing away at his ears, and light gloves on—him a-selling 'essence!—but his suit was brand-new, and dudish as they make 'em, and he wore a red necktie and a long black cord onto his eyeglasses, and I s'pose he looked good to Marjie, though I should 'a' put him down as nothing but skim milk myself.

"Howdy do, Mr. Porter," says I, shaking him by the hand—it was so soft it squshed. "I'm glad to know any friend of Marjie's, and to have 'em eat their vittles with us, if they can put up with poor cooking," says I, polite as I could.

He bowed and smiled and gushed till you'd 'a' thought I was Queen Victory asking him to take potluck at

Windsor Castle, so I went right in and took off my bunnet and begun stirring up a cake for tea, leaving them setting on the front steps.

Pretty soon out comes Marjie, poking her head into the back kitchen.

"Oh, Aunt Hepsey," says she, "I—I thought maybe I could help you."

"Mercy sakes alive, child!" says I. "Go back and tend to your young man. You can help about supper any time."

"Er—Aunt Hepsey," says she, kind of sidling along by the table, "how do you like him? Don't you think he's handsome?"

"Waal," says I, dishing out my batter with a careful hand, "handsome is as handsome does," Marjie, you know that; and I s'pose he does as handsome as he knows how. He looks to me some as if he sung tenor. Land, I wish your Uncle Si was here to kill a chicken! I don't want your beau a-thinking we ain't fed you up well. You don't s'pose he could kill one himself, do ye? If I fixed him up in Si's old overalls and jumper?"

Marjie giggled fit to kill. "I'll ask him if you want me to, Aunt Hepsey, but I don't really believe he could, do you?"

"Mercy, no!" says I. "He don't look as if he could kill a fly real handy. But thanks be to goodness! there's Elder Fleming a-coming down the road this very minute. He'll do it, I bet a cooky. You run to the side door. No. I'll do it myself. You go back to your beau."

Elder Fleming may be a minister, but I can tell you he's just as good help around the barn and the kitchen as he is in the mission circle, and that's more than you can say for most of 'em. He had the best chicken in the flock killed and picked in less than no time, and then I set him down by the kitchen table to look over a pail of dangle berries for me; and that way I kept him tolling along till he had to stay to supper, whether or no. That young minister is what I call reelly handsome, without even counting the handsome he does. He can talk good sense, too, and some way I didn't expect much of that

from Vincent Porter. I wa'n't afeared of comparisons.

But land! of course nothing turned out as I had planned it. Si got in just at supper time and tickled to death to find there was company and special vittles. Tickled to death, too, to have two young fellers there to talk politics to. Talking politics is to Si like eating mice in cream gravy is to a cat, and sometimes I've thought that the less he knows about 'em, the longer and louder he'll talk. So in he started, laying out the president and Congress, and all the trusts, just as if he'd ever laid an eye on one of 'em, and a-calling on the young minister and that Porter feller to give their opinions till I thought I should fly to pieces. Most old married men is blind as bats about young folks, but Si beats the whole kit and caboodle for blindness, and neither one of the two could do a solitary thing to show off before Marjie except to take turns passing of her the butter and the jell.

It was just as bad after supper, for Marjie would have us all come out and set on the steps with her—the dew a-falling, too—and bimeby Porter up and sassed Si, and then the young minister sailed into Porter for doing it. Marjie cried and ran into the house, and Si went out to the barn, and the two young fellers got away one at a time, and I was left there alone. It was a nice, pleasant tea party we had for Marjie!

All at once I heard a little voice over the banisters saying: "Aunt Hepsey." It didn't sound much louder, than a little teeny lost kitten's, but it was what I had been listening for, and I got upstairs as fast as was any ways reasonable for a woman of my heft.

Marjie came to the door of her room and pulled me over to a chair and set down on a stool and buried her head in my white apron.

"Oh, Aunt Hepsey," says she, "I'm just too miserable for anything!"

"Waal, Susy," says I, smoothing her hair, "don't you think it's about time you told your Aunt Hepsey all about it?"

"Susy?" says she, bobbing her head

right up. "Aunt Hepsey, how did you know?"

"Oh," says I, kinder careless, "your Aunt Hepsey knows more than you give her credit for. Go ahead and tell me all about it now."

You could tell she was awful glad to, the way she set there and poured out the whole story; more stuff than I could write down in a year if I gave up housework and wrote stiddy.

The gist of it, though, was this: She was Suzanne Carter from New York, and she had run away from home the twenty-fourth of June, and she hadn't sent a word to her pa since. But it was because he was so hard and cruel to her and wouldn't let her marry this dudish young Porter, whom she'd loved for as much as a month or so, and wouldn't listen to a word against him, though her pa had took an awful spite against him and called him "a young nincompoop" and other things like that.

Vincent had wanted her to get married right away, but she had loved her pa too much, even if he was cruel to her, and so she'd come away here to give his heart time to soften; and she hadn't even let Vincent come to see her till now, because folks had been watching him, thinking they'd find her through him. And finally he'd thought of this scheme and bought the essence wagon and come in disguise to see her, and pretty soon her pa would have to give in. And now she didn't know what was the matter with her—she must be a horrid, changeable, wishy-washy thing—but some way she didn't love him as much as she had thought she did; he did seem kind of silly somehow. And she wanted to see her father awful, but, of course, he'd never forgive her; he must hate her by now. And then she bust out crying fit to kill.

I reached down and hauled the newspaper out of my petticoat pocket, where I'd carried it all that afternoon for safe-keeping, and I unrolled it and handed it to her.

"Read that," says I, pointing to the piece about her pa, "and see how bad he felt to lose his little girl, and then I guess you won't be scared about his

hating you. He's got horse sense, your pa has."

She couldn't hardly read for crying, but she managed to get through with it finally, and then she kissed her pa's picture about a hundred times, and buried her head in the paper and my apron together.

"Oh, I'm such a bad, willful, ungrateful, wicked girl!" says she. "Oh, Aunt Hepsey, what a fool I've been."

I couldn't really say nothing to that that was both truthful and polite, so I just set there and smoothed her head soothinglike while she cried it out. Bimeby she set up and kind of twinkled through her tears.

"You see, I *am* a little heathen, just as I said," says she, "and a worse one than you ever thought. Do you suppose father'll ever forgive me?"

I s'pose I orter have talked about the Prodigal Son, being a professor, but land! she hadn't been rioting no great that I could see, poor little posy, and truth don't compel me to own up that my good vittles is husks, if we do keep a pig in the back yard.

"Forgive you?" says I, soothing. "Don't you s'pose your Uncle Si and I would forgive you quicker'n scat, and hain't he your very own pa?"

"I'm not a-going to have anything to do with any man except fathers and uncles ever again," says she, after a while, burrowing her head into my apron.

"Oh, I dunno as I'd go quite so fur as all that," says I, "but I guess they'd be pretty good help in picking the others out. Is your pa any interested in missions?"

"I don't know," says she, blushing. "How soon can I send a telegram, Aunt Hepsey?"

"Not till to-morrow morning," says I, "but I'll start Si right out afore breakfast. You go write it out now while I go downstairs and finish up."

When I come back to tuck her into bed, she was a-setting there on the floor, studying that newspaper.

"Aunt Hepsey," says she, looking up, "I want to ask you something. If you was willing to take a wicked heathen boarder like me when you hated to, just to raise money for missions, why didn't you send word to father and get that thousand dollars to give to the heathen? Just think how pleased the minister would have been!"

"Marjie," says I, reproachful, "Marjie, do you think your Aunt Hepsey would——"

"Do you know what I think?" says she, interrupting and grabbing me tight around the waist. "I think, when it came right down to it, you loved your own little heathen better'n the great, big foreign ones, after all."

"I'm afeared I do," says I. "And that ain't the only thing; I'll bet I could lay my finger on a young minister of the gospel that's even worse in that respect than I be—him awful strong on missions, too."

Marjie blushed like a piney, but I ain't laying claims to being no prophet, though I can see through a plain glass window with my specs on.

One thing, though, I wouldn't never 'a' believed from the lips of Isaiah himself, and that was the size of the check that Marjie's pa writ out next night—when he came by special train—and give to Elder Fleming to be used for a house for them little widders on Injy's coral strand, to be named—you won't never believe your ears, no more than I did, but Si heard him, too—to be named "*Aunt Hepsey's Home.*"



The Fountain of Youth

By Hildegarde Lavender

Author of "Other People's Virtues," "Capitalizing a Bad Habit," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

WHEN Ethelinda lay in her cradle, she had to a degree unusual, even among babies, the solemn, aged face of experience. She grew a little younger, of course, as she progressed from long clothes to creepers, thence to rompers, and thence again to prim little skirts. But the juvenation of her countenance, common to the human race as it emerges from the inexpressibly ancient look of its earliest days, was not very complete in her case. At ten, she had the serious mien of a dull fifty; at twelve, her eyes surveyed the immemorial universe as a contemporary. Her little brown pigtails could not impart an air of youth to her. When, at about fourteen, she was ordered by her careful parents and a careful oculist into glasses, Ethelinda might have been sixty, judging by the elderly gravity of her countenance.

Like most children of preternatural solemnity and antiquity of feature, Ethelinda was a quiet, biddable child who learned her lessons, seldom tore her clothes, never originated mischief, and who had from infancy a singularly clear idea as to what she wanted and a singularly direct, though unobtrusive, way of getting it. She was a favorite with her seniors when her desires did not happen to come into conflict with theirs, and she even managed to be on passably good terms with companions of her own age, for, although she did not share in their escapades, she was not of the "mean" disposition that bears tales about the skylarking that it is constitutionally unable to enjoy. At twenty, it will be easily seen, Ethelinda was a somewhat dull, not quite unpopu-

lar, very persistent young woman of no great claims to either beauty or ugliness.

It was at a little later period of her existence that her attention was directed—as whose is not?—to the great supply of literature in the world on the subject of woman's duty as to the preservation of her youthful charms, and on the means at hand for fulfilling that duty. Ethelinda, her mind once turned upon the subject, took stock of her youthful charms. She found them somewhat as follows: item, a figure of medium height, inclining a trifle to settled lines and middle-aged embonpoint; item, large, steady, brown, nearsighted eyes, shining quietly behind gold-rimmed spectacles—Ethelinda's oculist was one of those incarnate fiends who insist upon spectacles and refuse to allow a patient to be stylish, though astigmatic, in lorgnette or pince-nez; item, the usual complement of features, not ravishingly beautiful, not particularly bad; item, a fair skin, but no beautiful display of color; item, excellent, serviceable teeth behind a sizable, fresh-looking mouth. But over all the items brooded something—Ethelinda did not know what it was—something drab, something uninteresting, something unmistakably elderly. Even though she looked at herself with that partiality of judgment which most of the race displays toward its own reflection, Ethelinda was sure that there was something lacking to complete beauty, to the complete charm of youth, in her make-up.

"I look," she told herself dispassionately, "as old as Aunt Sabina." Then



Not until she broke her mirror with a dumb-bell, and knocked her tea caddy off the shelf, did she feel that her quarters were too cramped for her program.

she assured herself that this was impossible; that she couldn't look as old as Aunt Sabina, who was twenty years older than she, who had ripples of silver in her hair, who had lines across her forehead and about her eyes and her lips. Yet the confronting image denied the claims of reason. She did look as old as Aunt Sabina! It was evident to Ethelinda that she must begin at once to preserve her youth, or what would she look like when she reached Aunt Sabina's age? She began religiously to study the subject. She was quite convinced that any subject may be mastered by diligent study. She was almost sure that the *beauté du diable* might be wrested from nature, if one was only determined and systematic enough about it.

Now Ethelinda did not belong to the class despised of socialists—the idle rich. She was a conscientiously self-and-others-supporting young person who went daily to a big city library, and there sought, for remuneration, to serve children with the sort of literature they ought to enjoy. She could not, therefore, devote her entire time to the first system of the preservation of youth that she adopted. Indeed, she probably adopted it, out of the multitude of systems offered her by the current literature of the day, and the advertisements of many beauty culturists, because it kindly adapted itself to the requirements of a daily wage earner. It was the day-a-week rest cure.

It required some struggle for Ethelinda to devote a day a week to the retaining of such youth as she possessed, for it meant that she must forego the privilege of attending church, and that was a privilege which she prized on religious, social, and traditional grounds. But she firmly repeated to herself the French proverb she had learned at her Tuesday evening French course at the Young Woman's Self-Improvement Association, to the effect that it was necessary to suffer in order to be beautiful; and she began to suffer by taking a rest cure one day a week.

It was difficult for her, used as she was to arising promptly at seven, upon

the first whir of her alarm clock each morning, to lie abed and try to sleep until nine o'clock, but she tried it. It was even more difficult to persuade the serving maid of the boarding house in which she practiced the difficult rites of sacred beauty culture, to bring her a bowl of bouillon at that hour, in place of the substantial meal of fish balls, buckwheat cakes, and coffee with which her fellow boarders were ushering in the day of rest. It was also difficult to persuade the chambermaid not to descend noisily and ruthlessly upon her, brush, cloth, and fresh towels in hand, the gleam of an anticipated Sunday afternoon off in her eye, and the stern purpose of "finishing her rooms" in her heart. It was a matter for almost superhuman effort to obtain the slight, delicate, but nourishing repast that the rest cure prescribed, instead of the Sunday noonday meal of the boarding house. But Ethelinda had always been persistent in the pursuit of her eminently reasonable desires, and she was persistent in the pursuit of her day's rest cure. By the end of the first week she had tipped and otherwise coerced the staff of servants into aiding her.

She was conscientious in her regimen. However open-eyed she might feel, she did not permit herself, on the consecrated Sundays, to read a line in either the secular or the sacred literature with which her room was provided. However she yearned toward her work-basket, she refused her ambitious fingers the needle. However her dutiful mind reverted to her parents and friends at home, she forbade herself a pen or pencil with which to communicate with them. A rest cure was what she was taking, and a rest cure she would take, at no matter what personal inconvenience.

At the end of two months she looked hopefully at herself in the mirror on Monday morning. The most painstaking scrutiny revealed no change for the better; her skin was still uninterestingly pale, her eyes still lacked the fatal lights of fascination. But Ethelinda

knew that Rome was not built in a day. She kept on rest curing.

At the end of six months she discovered that she had a dim, irritated-looking little line between her brows. Otherwise she was unchanged. Three more months developed a crisscross wrinkle, and another showed her a gray hair in the midst of the brown. Ethelinda wore a perturbed frown as she wended her way to the library that Monday morning. But in the periodical room she found encouragement. There was a fresh and eminently sane article on the different sorts of beauty treatment required by different physical constitutions and by different temperaments.

Ethelinda took heart again. Obviously she had been trying a system not adapted to her temperament. She was—she was a clear-sighted and sane young woman, able to view herself dispassionately—she was undoubtedly of the phlegmatic disposition that required a treatment totally unlike the nervous, tense disposition. Not rest, not relaxation, but exercise, the stirring of the blood, was what she needed! Ethelinda, with a vast sigh of relief at the regaining of her Sundays, became a devotee of exercise.

A hall room in a city boarding house was never intended by the architects for gymnastic purposes. But Ethelinda was used to coping with difficulties and to overcoming them. In the joy of her recovered Sundays, with their church-going, their letter writing, their occasional bit of mending, their reading, their piously undertaken visits to art museums and the like, she felt able to take a complete set of exercises in even smaller space than that allotted to her on the third-floor front of her temporary home. Not until she broke her mirror with a dumb-bell, and knocked her tea caddy off the shelf she had had constructed for her bric-a-brac, did she feel that her quarters were too cramped for her program. However, she soon discovered that by piling the chairs upon the bed, letting down the leaf of her table, and rolling the bureau back against it, she could make room for the waist-reducing exercise, which she

perceived as the most necessary. The throat-and-neck exercise mercifully required no more space than that in which she stood; and by arising half an hour earlier each morning she was able to take them both.

She had been promised a feeling of wonderful invigoration, as well as grace and slenderness, as the result of these exercises, and she was a little discouraged that she did not immediately feel its pleasant glow surge through her. However, again she reminded herself that Rome was not built in a day.

Six months of conscientious, daily practice of the bending and twisting exercises found Ethelinda somewhat slimmer about the waist, to be sure, and perhaps a trifle fuller in the throat; but her mirror told her that she continued to look elderly notwithstanding. Youth, so far as youth resided upon the face, seemed to be eluding her as persistently as it eluded the least conscientious woman—the woman who had never realized the duty of preserving it, who had never made a study of the means of preserving it! This was staggering to Ethelinda's philosophy, which was backed by all her former experience—namely, that all things are attainable by effort. She grew panicky in the overthrow of her creed.

Even the best balanced of young women, when she is embarked upon a serious undertaking like the capture of beauty, may be pardoned for losing her head when she finds that she is not succeeding in her venture. Ethelinda, when the bending and twisting had, despite the mildly beneficial effect upon her figure, failed to impart to her countenance the look for which she longed, became a trifle reckless, and for a year or so sought her goal by frantic dashes, so to speak, rather than by a steady march.

For one two-month period she eschewed meat; she had read somewhere of a houri who had acquired a skin of alabaster and limpid eyes of turquoise on a diet of oranges and green vegetables. Such a diet is difficult of attainment in a boarding house; oranges and green vegetables are served in unsatisfying quantities—if one confines one's

self to them, one is likely to go hungry, even if one spends an undue portion of one's pin money for extra oranges. This our heroine discovered, even before she discovered that the regimen was making her extremely wan, somewhat wrinkled, and almost too faint for her daily tasks. She took to snapping at the children in the library. Even when she added nuts—"rich in protein" as the instructions said—to her menu, she did not recover tone rapidly; and it was not until she set her fork, and afterward her eager teeth, once more into a juicy, barbarous piece of steak that she really began to resume her normal condition of mind. And the experiment, instead of helping her on her way toward physical perfection, had retarded her advance!

She read, with inexpressible longing, of women to whom girlish beauty was vouchsafed as a result of the dew-and-barefoot treatment. But not even her ingenuity and determination were equal to compassing dew-and-barefoot possibilities in a New York boarding house. She thought of Central Park, of before-dawn excursions to its meadows; but the season was winter. The dew would be in the form of frost. And the park policemen were so liable to misjudge a barefoot young woman! Ethelinda, shuddering, saw before her mind's eye the awful words "drunk and disorderly," and put the thought of the dew-and-barefoot treatment far from her. The goat's-milk-and-cheese treatment appealed to her, however, as almost equally naturalistic; and she tried it,



When Ethelinda let the bottle fall upon the stair carpet, to the damage of that ancient floor covering, the accident ended for her the milk-bath route to physical perfection.

though its chief ingredients are delicacies not easy to obtain in New York. A brief course of them proving ineffective to do anything for Ethelinda except to play havoc with her strong digestion, she abandoned them. Buttermilk, both real and manufactured, was also tried and found wanting.

She read sadly of the actress whose wonderful complexion was alleged to be due to champagne baths; and less discouragedly of the other whose wondrous charms were said to be the gift of milk baths. Ethelinda would have had conscientious as well as financial scruples against any use whatever of

champagne, and her landlady might have distinctly comprehensible objections to milk baths of any size in the boarding-house bathtubs; but a sort of milk bath was not out of the question—a milk sponge, so to speak, in the basin.

The pursuer of youth took to bringing in a surreptitious bottle of milk each evening, hiding it in her muff or under the evening paper. She knew how the landlady—proud soul!—would resent the sight of that milk bottle as a criticism upon her bountiful table; and she knew how she herself would object to telling the landlady the truth. Commendable as is the pursuit of beauty, variously and constantly enjoined upon womankind as it is, only a very brave woman will admit to her boarding house that she is deliberately engaged in it. So that when Ethelinda, striving to conceal her bottle from the eyes of her landlady one night, let it fall upon the stair carpet to the damage of that ancient floor covering, the accident ended for her the milk-bath route to physical perfection.

Not only did her landlady say, in injured tones, that if Miss Ethelinda had only mentioned the desire for more milk to drink, she would have taken pleasure in providing it—for she prided herself that she ran a boarding house upon liberal principles, and she would be thankful to know when her patrons had any cause of complaint!—but the milk baths had not made Ethelinda in the least like the actress who ascribed her charms to them!

She toyed for a week or two with the "age-is-but-a-thought; think-youth-and-you-will-achieve-youth" school of beauty culture. But Ethelinda suffered the drawback of being a New England Congregationalist, and she could not "think youth" hard enough to achieve anything but a distraught expression of countenance. When she happened to catch a glimpse of herself in the mirror, "thinking youth," she hastily decided that that method was not for a woman of her religious ancestry and training, and she abandoned it immediately, resuming the more laborious, but less in-

sane-looking, method of massage with cold cream. And still Venus, Diana, and the beautiful young actresses who confide their health habits and their favorite receipts to the evening newspapers, outshone her on every count.

Some women would have been discouraged by this time, but not Ethelinda. She was still of her ancient conviction that all things are attainable by effort. She was virtuously conscious of having begun her quest in ample season, not, like so many unwise virgins, deferring the pursuit until the winged creature was a dim, flying light upon the far horizon. She felt that it was not right or just that she should not succeed. But she was not of the tribe that expresses its resentment of injustice by recklessly abandoning right practices. She only studied the subject more deeply. If she still lacked that which she sought—the evanescent gleam of color and gladness that are the very heart of youth and beauty—it must be because she was not striving after it by the proper method—proper for her, that is. She read and pondered further.

She fell upon the convincing writer who declared that beauty culture must be not a department of life, but life itself. It must impregnate all living. One must not sit down in a chair without consciously sliding into grace; one must not walk on the street without consciously carrying head and shoulders at the beautiful angle; one must take no breath without making it deep and beauty-giving! One must not devote an hour a day to exercising for beauty, but must make all exercise, every act, tend toward beauty—the walk to market, the walk through the shop and through the street, the sweeping of the stairs—and so on and so on. And one must have the stimulation of variety in one's beauty exercises or they would be all futile, and would tend rather to depress, to age, to render dull, than to vivify and rejuvenate.

Ethelinda studied these sayings earnestly, and somewhat disheartenedly. A life divided between the children's room of the library, the Young



The gentleman in glasses who dragged her, roughly and peremptorily, from beneath a touring car, turned out to be a fellow employee at the library.

Woman's Self-Improvement Association, and the boarding house seemed to offer very little in the way of variety, of vivifying interest and stimulation.

And she simply couldn't practice deep breathing in the library—she wouldn't have a chance for a complete, relaxing, renewing deep breath once in four

hours, the way she had to be prepared to answer questions.

But, after long pondering, she came to a conclusion. Since one needed life, variety, to stimulate one, as well as exercise to combat a tendency to stoutness, one must take one's beauty culture in the street! It was open-air exercise that gave one the color of a houri, the bright eyes of a *peri*, the springy step of a child. Ethelinda probably did not know that her thoughts were capable of such fervid transcription; but at any rate she took again the heart of hope.

Open-air exercise in that great city in which dwelt the young Miss Ponce de Leon—you will recall him as one of the earliest recorded searchers for a fountain of youth—is difficult to come by. Of course, one may walk to the scene of one's daily labors; but that means a daily treadmill round—the same streets, the same people, or people who look the same—each day. It means, perhaps, weariness in reaching the seat of one's occupation and tardiness in reaching one's dinner. It means an invitation to nervous prostration as one crosses a New York street among drays and automobiles every five minutes. But the persistent Ethelinda, discounting all these drawbacks, determined upon youth, bent upon beauty, walked to her library every day and walked from it every evening. She practiced deep breathing as she walked. She inhaled to a silent "one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten"; she held her breath to the same count; and she expelled it to a third mental recitation of the same merry numerals.

She was so absorbed in this arithmetical and hygienic pursuit one evening that she forgot to wait the traffic policeman's signal, and breasted the cross stream of travel at Thirty-fourth Street, to the imminent danger of her limbs, if not of her life. The gentleman in glasses who dragged her, roughly and peremptorily, from beneath a touring car, turned out to be a fellow employee at the library. He walked, he told the grateful Ethelinda, for the sake of his digestion. He suffered from nervous

dyspepsia! The next evening he paused at the door of the children's room to ask her if she was walking downtown. Ethelinda admitted that she was, though she admitted it with a certain regret. She was afraid that conversational amenities might prevent her from practicing her deep breathing to the rhythmic count of "one, two," and so forth.

For two or three evenings her fears were justified. Then she suggested deep breathing to her companion as a cure for nervous dyspepsia, and he, much touched by her consideration, began to count even as she did. In great companionability, they marched down the dusky streets together, deeply breathing, one absorbed in thoughts of youth and one in thoughts of health. By and by they reached the place where they were able to breathe deeply without devoting their entire attention to the process, and then they began to discover other bonds of sympathy between them than the deep-breathing bond. They liked the same plays, the same concerts; neither had a snobbish distaste for cheap seats; they held stimulatingly different political views, and had enough unlikeness in their poetical tastes to make talk about their favorite poets quite interesting. They liked country rambles, when the springtime came; and they found that they possessed very similar ideas in regard to suburban architecture.

It was about this time that Ethelinda discovered, to her delighted amazement—for she had somewhat forgotten her conscientious pursuit of youthful beauty, except in so far as the walking and the deep breathing, now become almost natural, forwarded her aim—that she was looking younger and prettier than ever before in her life. Her eyes had the sparkle, the gladness, the glamour that they had always lacked before. Not even the gold-rimmed spectacles could disguise the fact. Her hair seemed to her excited eyes to be growing curly. Certainly her cheeks were pink—not a dull, steady pink, but a wavering, uncertain, evanescent pink, infinitely more alluring. And there was actually a little dimple in the corner of the fresh

looking, sizable mouth! Ethelinda, making these entrancing discoveries about herself, blushed brilliantly with pleasure. She wondered if her companion in deep breathing had noticed how she had improved under her successful beauty-culture course.

Perhaps he had noticed it. At any rate, he took occasion, on one of the Sunday jaunts to the suburbs, to call her attention to a very desirable house "for sale on easy terms"; and then he asked her to share it with him. He did not put the matter quite so baldly as this. In fact, he put it so that Ethelinda thought that neither his favorite poet nor hers had ever said anything one-half so beautiful!

Ethelinda has six children spilling out of the suburban house now. There are always dancing lights in her eyes, even when they are heavy from sleeplessness; the dimple is permanent at the corner of her wholesome, fresh-looking mouth. She has forgotten that she ever heard of a milk bath or of a beauty

diet. She still breathes deeply, because that has become a matter of second nature to her. She is as busy as she can be from morning until night seven days in the week, and the suggestion of a rest cure on Sunday would strike her as the utterance of an insane person. But, in spite of some gray threads that show in her crinkly hair, and of some lines upon her forehead and about her shining eyes, she has grown very young looking—as young looking as her Aunt Sabina.

"The fountain of youth?" Ethelinda would say, if any one addressed her on the subject of that ancient myth. "Love and an absorbing interest—they are the waters of the fountain of youth."

And not even Ethelinda's husband denies it, though he knows now that Ethelinda was practicing beauty culture when she went one-two-threeing it down the street and out under the automobiles one winter afternoon! So ungrateful are we to the half-truths by which we climb to truth itself!



The Quest

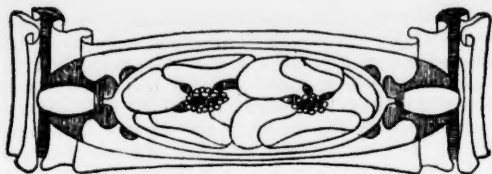
UP and down the winter world, Fortune fared a-weary;
 O'er the hill, and through the lanes,
 Past the darkened windowpanes,
 Where the beechland boughs empearled framed the moorlands dreary.

Snow lay on her garments' fold, through the branches sifting.
 Mortal-fearing forest deer,
 Warm and shielding, pressed anear,
 While the north wind, bleak and cold, set the beech leaves drifting.

In the lighted castle hall, minstrel harps were ringing.
 Men at arms beside the gate
 Knew the wassail lasted late.
 Naught they heard of beggar's call, through the glee men's singing.

But a moorland shepherd old, when the night was dying,
 Marked her footprint 'neath the thatch,
 Saw where she had raised the latch,
 Found her, sheltered from the cold, 'mid the warm sheep lying.

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.



The Country Store

By Eugene Wood

Author of "Back Home," "Folks Back Home," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

PART II.

WORSE than the ear dreads discords, the mind dreads change.

But without discords, there is no music, and the world that does not change is a dead one. So the age in which the country store came into being blew up with a loud noise in '61.

The age began when our forefathers decided that, on the whole, Indians, and wolves, and rattlesnakes were better to live with than the founders of this glorious republic. What they ran away to sheds a light on what they ran away from.

Some few things they carried with them in their Conestoga wagons, but in the main, when that world was young, all a man needed to set up housekeeping was an ax, an auger, and a saw. All outdoors was his lumber yard and general furnishing store. Lacking nails, what wasn't pinned together was lashed together. Moss and mud were not so pretty as plaster to look at, but they kept the weather out. The bedstead had the bark on, and the mattress was a tick stuffed with leaves. What had kept the buffalo warm, if peeled off the animal, would keep the family warm, as "kiver." They deadened the forests, and in between the bony skeletons of trees made their first crops. And presently Indians, and wolves, and

rattlesnakes were gone, and there was peace with plenty; plenty, that is, if a man had a normal family to work for him, fourteen by the first wife and fourteen by the second.

It used up women pretty quickly, that way of living, but there were plenty of them, and as fast as one wife keeled over in her tracks from hard work, there was another anxious to step into her shoes. They minded what it said about "Wives, obey your husbands," and if the husbands took a stick to them once in a while, and maybe twice in a while, why, anything was better than being an old maid.

Peace and plenty there were, with all those hands to make the crops and butcher, to cook and wash and milk and churn, and spin and weave and make up clothing. There was more wheat in the rick than could be ground up into flour against the next wheat harvest, more hog meat in the smoke house, more apple butter, more cheese, more potatoes, more cloth—more everything than they knew what to do with.

Then what?

The same old story. Adam no sooner finds a comfortable Eden than Eve proceeds to roust him out of it. The womenfolks simply cannot stand it to see a man happy and contented. No, sir;

he's got to shave and put on a clean shirt.

When peace and plenty came to bless the early settler's cabin, peace didn't stay long. Soon it was: "Paw, can't we have this?" and, "Paw, can't we have that?" wanting to put on style, wanting to have it easy, wanting to have a good time. Maple sugar is good—too good to be true, we find in these days—but nothing would do the women-folks but they must have cane sugar that comes from foreign parts. The linen from the flax that the boys grew and the girls hacked, the wool the boys sheared and the girls carded, the linsey-woolsey of the two combined, stuff that would wear a lifetime—That was just what ailed it; a body got sick of seeing it around. Dyed with sumac berries, and butternut, and hickory bark, it wasn't stylish enough. Alongside of the figured calico, and the indigo and madder dyes you see at Shawneetown—Pffff! So common!

And what would a girl think of a fellow that went a-sparkin' in a coon-skin cap, instead of one of these dressy wool hats?

The country store was practically a signboard reading: "THIS WAY OUT OF EDEN." For the pioneers to trade off their surplus for superfluities was to give in, did they but know it, to women's natural do-lessness and extravagance. And look at the consequences!

All the women nowadays care for is to gad about and spend their husbands' money. They don't even do their own washing and ironing. They say they can't. So far from spinning, and weaving, and making up clothing for a whole family, the wives of nowadays never so much as think of making a shirt for their poor men. In despair of getting the trifling things to sew on buttons to the same, detachable shirt buttons had to be invented. They do not milk or churn; the milk's brought to their door in bottles. They do not bake or cook, for what they cannot get from the grocery ready for the table, they get from the delicatessen shop. They do not lug the water from

the spring; it's piped into the apartment, cold and hot, so that they hardly need to put a kettle on. They do not chop the wood when their husbands are busy about other things or do not feel just like it; there is steam heat and there is gas. They do not carry out the table scraps to the chickens or the pigs; the janitor attends to that. They just do nothing, and have a hired girl to help them do it. And she must eat out on the kitchen tubs because she is not good enough, if you please, to sit up to the table with the family, and put in her talk about what does not concern her, as she has a perfect right to do if this is to be a free country where everybody is as good as everybody else. Yes, and a darn sight better if the truth was known.

But do not think that Adam was put out of this Eden without a struggle. The Adams of those days must have foreseen what would be the upshot, or they would not so have despised labor-saving devices, would not have been so suspicious of any way of making a living save with a calloused hand, would not have made it a matter of religion that to dress up and have a good time was downright devilment. To wear a ribbon or a ring, to dance, to go to the theater—all well-authenticated wickedness. The age of the pioneers hung on like a snapping turtle, and didn't let go until it thundered in the tempest of the Civil War.

When memory's camera, set about knee-high to a duck, as the fellow says, began to take its snapshots of the country store, luxury must have just about got to where it dared to raise its head. The old folks up in the Amen Corner might growl, but luxury had an air as who should say: "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

It seems to me that ice cream, for instance, in Johnnycake Corners must have been sort of wild and reckless. Maybe that was because of the dissipated-sounding name of the place where it was sold. When a young fellow took his girl into the place bearing the sign: "ICE CREAM SALOON," if that word "saloon" was not enough,



When a young fellow took his girl into the place bearing the sign: "Ice Cream Saloon."

how could his conscience, that had striven with him, that had pointed out to him how much better he would do to save his money, and not trifle it away on a giggling girl—how could his conscience do anything but groan pitifully, "Aw!" when it saw he was determined to go headlong to destruction?

Yes, when I came on the scene, the world was dead in which all that a man asked of a wife was that she should be a good worker, and all that she asked of a husband was that, since she was working for board wages, he should be a "good provider." The fellows had become bashful of the girls, and instead of offering them a steady situation, to be jumped at, they knew that they were asking a favor, so they had to have candies with "WILL YOU BE MINE?" printed on them; they had

to treat the girls to ice cream and soda water.

The soda fountain could not have been so very old, because when I visited my cousins in a town even smaller than Johnnycake Corners, the fountain in the country store there must have been about the first invented. It gave real soda water, it did.

All the four sirups—vanilla, lemon, strawberry, and "I Don't Care"—were not only sweet, but also sour as green gooseberries. Made your teeth gritty on the edges to taste of them. The man poured the sirup in the glass, and then pumped up, with a shiny silver pump—solid silver, I was told, with a real handle like a cistern pump—the water from where the ice was packed around it to make it so cold the roof of your mouth would ache. This had

pure cooking soda dissolved in it, and when its alkali met the acid of the sirup, it fizzed up—fwhee-ee-ee! and you had to drink it quick before it got through seidlitz powdering. It was very much healthier than the false thing I had known as soda water. I was going to make fun of it at first, but my cousins said: "Hay! Looky here!" they said. "Do you know how they make soda water where you live at?"

"No!" I said.

"No. Nor you wouldn't drink it if you did. Is marble dust good for your insides? No, it ain't. Is vitr'ol good for your insides? Well, that's what they make your kind of soda water out of—marble dust and oil of vitr'ol."

In this young world, women and children were freer than in the old one that died. But when liberty is gained, privilege is lost; women and children were not allowed to use tobacco. To soften the blow to little boys, the country store sold them a maple-sugar cigar, with white-candy ashes and a little square of red tinfoil to represent the coal. But for the ladies who had formed the habit while their skirts were even shorter than the siege of Sumter, there was nothing but to slink up to the attic where it wasn't finished off, take out the stopper of the chimney hole, and smoke up that, so as not to smell up the house. Orris root was largely consumed to hide their guilty secret. It didn't, though.

Cigars—or segars—had been in use since "long, long before Columbus landed here," but the age of do-lessness and extravagance had not then reached the pitch where a lady or a gentleman was too confounded lazy to whittle the material for a smoke off the plug or twist the country store kept in stock. Tobacco was tobacco, and there were no tins of special brands of chopped alfalfa. Even the shock of the War of the Rebellion could not jar the men-folks loose from chewing, but the daintier among them were affecting what was variously styled, "shorts," "fine cut," and "soft-eating tobacco."

Ever since the Boston patriots dumped into the harbor the tea that

could be sold lawfully at a less price than they could smuggle it, the cup that cheers, but not inebriates never had much of a standing in this country. Tea caddies there were in every store, pretty with pictures of the heathen carrying shoulder yokes, but tea was niggled at, never more than a quarter of a pound bought at a time. Only when a person felt too "porely" to go to work, but not "porely" enough to have the doctor, when they sent a tray up with dry toast, and a saucer of canned peaches, was a cup of store tea used, and then it was taken "bare-footed," without cream or sugar, so as to make it seem more like medicine. But when a fellow felt as if he'd like to pick a fuss with somebody just for the fun of fighting, then coffee was the tippie. Ah, is there anything can touch the spot so neatly and so efficaciously?

There was no niggling at that in four-ounce purchases. Before the old age died, the people bought their coffee ten pounds for a dollar. It was no number seven either, spoiled by sea water, full of punky grains and sticks and dirt, roasted and ground up together. It was all green coffee in that elder age, and when mother roasted it in a pan in the oven, stooping over and scorching her face till it was red as Pharaoh, a fragrance filled the house that had no fellow except when on a frosty morning the coffee mill sent out its cheery snarl.

The Mrs. Swallow, by the way, who always chose "orange-blue calliker" to dress her girls in, had a fancy for a certain flavorful Santos that she called by the sweet name of "polecat cawfy."

When the Civil War ended that age, and the brave boys went to the front to uphold the nation while the wise boys stayed at the rear and held up the nation, coffee went up in price like a dog-chased cat up a tree. I don't know that I blame the men so much who whimpered for "peace at any price." I have no doubt it was pretty tough to have boys eighteen and nineteen years old shooting at each other with deadly weapons with intent to kill; I do not doubt it was a mean trick to pay those

in rag money who risked their lives and those in gold who risked only their capital, but when green coffee goes up to fifty cents a pound, the situation becomes such as to merit calling for "this fratricidal strife" to cease. For, oh, my friends and fellow travelers, though you may make of chicory and toasted rye something that looks like coffee, it isn't coffee. It may be healthier, but it doesn't touch the spot. Now, don't you try to tell me different, for I'll not hear to it.

But when the cruel war was over, and coffee was once more where an honest man could drink it, in many and many a henpecked home, they still used "extract," a tarry, bitterish gawm that hadn't a smidgeon of the fragrant berry in it, though it professed to be the natural goodness concentrated by a highly scientific process. The do-lessness of woman was beginning to show itself, and if a man was anyways cowed or broken-spirited, his woman could evade her rightful duty to parch the coffee, to wake the dewy echoes of the morn with the melodious mill, to bring the beverage to the second boil neatly, to settle it with an egg. She merely added hot water to the gawm, and he submitted like the craven that he was.

Extravagance went on apace until the country store, which began by swapping for their surplus of country produce—butter, eggs, feathers, and beeswax—what the local laborers, rural and urban, could not supply, could not set forth all the luxuries demanded. One kind of calico no longer did for all the females of the flock. More capital was required than even a partnership could swing, to carry a full line of feminine dewdabs as well as hardware, groceries, boots and shoes, queensware, Orleans molasses, and wagon tar. Secession was in the air, and the loose confederation of the country store dissolved into separate special stores.

Of all these little independent states, so to speak, I've always had a tender feeling for the queensware store. Possibly there is some pity in it, too, for the man that kept the one in Johnny-cake Corners had very little trade. But

there is also admiration for his skill. It isn't every one can drive a nail right through a plate and not crack it. I never saw the man do it, but I saw it after it was done. Out in front of his store stood a board on which were nailed all kinds of dishes, big and little, and not a crack in one of 'em. I know because I looked o' purpose.

The dry-goods store became the home of luxury and refinement. It was there the whitewashed cannon stove with a long pipe slung on wires depending from the ceiling was first replaced by the sybaritic hot-air furnace, and the whole world learned that "register" meant more than something they do up at the county courthouse. It was in the dry-goods store the joke originated that was so funny when it was new.

"Maw," whines the country boy standing over the iron grating in the floor, "I do believe I'm goin' to be down sick with a fever."

"Why, bub, what makes you think so?"

"I feel sich kind o' hot streaks, like, a-runnin' up mu laigs."

The country store had been a sort of open forum wherein the men could "argy" by the hour about predestination and free will, and protection and free trade. But in the unnatural hush of the dry-goods store without a stove to spit at, how could debate be carried on as it should be? Thus:

"I say it is."

"Well, I say it ain't, and if you had the sense you's born with, you'd know it wasn't."

"I seen it in the paper, where it stated so."

"Yes, some ole Democrat paper. I wouldn't believe anything in a Democrat paper if I knowed 'twas so. And if you was open to reason, and wasn't sich a fool, you wouldn't either."

"Looky here now, mister, that's twicet you called me a fool."

"Well, I'm tryin' to git you so's you'll answer to your name."

No. A real argument you could not have in a dry-goods store. And in the other special stores there weren't enough people to make it interesting.



"Looky here now, mister, that's twicet you called me a fool."

So, for a time, the grocery sheltered this institution of a free people. The grocer never more than tolerated it. It never seemed to him that so much talk of politics and religion or, as the catechism puts it, "my duty toward God, and my duty toward my neighbor," was really business. And what are we here for but business, I'd like to know. One man that I knew used, as closing time drew nigh, to call out to the disputants, "January!" and then a little later, "February!" and at the last moment, "March!" and they marched. They'd hop down off the counter, and make for the door, saying only over their shoulders at him, "Night, Jim."

Just to show you, not long ago I happened into a general store in a small village after supper on a winter's night. Men sat about the stove conversing, and, thinks I: "I'll hear the regular country-store jawing match," Ed Matthews entered. Ed would rather talk politics than eat, and he is pretty good at both. "Evenin', gentle-

men," he said, and plunged right in. "I say the trusts is a good thing."

His glittering eye roved round the circle. No one spoke. No one uttered a peep. Supposing trusts were a good thing, what of it? Supposing they weren't, what can you do?

Ah, my unhappy, country!

Once on a time the grocer was a skilled artisahn. Or wasn't it art rather than artisanship he had? To do up a pound of rice in a brown-paper cornucopia, tie it neatly and securely, and not spill a grain, is not that art? To make a paralleloped of a pound of crackers, and not have the darn thing break in the middle and scatter the crackers over the floor, is not that art?

But cornucopias are no more, and what does not come all ready in a package goes in a paper bag. His art is gone, the manual dexterity that once gave him a nimble mind—so that he was heeded when he said: "Well, this is what I think about it"—has disap-

peared. And how shall the country's welfare be discussed when there is no open cracker barrel, and the cheese comes in glass jars? Package goods have ruined the republic.

Take a last look upon the country store. It used to be that people sneaked off to the big cities to buy where there were better prices and wider selection. They did so secretly, for it was a sin like unto the sin of smuggling. And now the big department stores of the great cities openly maintain their wa-

gons in the small towns, taking their orders right from under the noses of the keepers of the local stores. And, as if that were not enough, the government has set up a parcels post!

The do-lessness and extravagance of woman have brought us to this pass. We are out of Eden and in the wilderness of the increasing cost of living. Oh, well! The promise is that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, and maybe the womenfolks will find us another Eden. You can't tell.



Attar of Roses

IN stately temples, long ago,
The fragrant incense of the East
Breathed softly through the crimson glow
Of altar fire before the priest.

Beyond him, in the shadows, bowed
The still, adoring worshipers;
Behind the inner temple's shroud
Low chanted hidden choristers.

The bright hilt fell, the victim sighed,
The solemn priest repeated o'er
The mystic words that glorified
The goddess they were knelt before.

But this a truer thought imparts
Of what a greater love may be:
A thousand roses gave their hearts
To make this gift for thee!

—ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH.

ADMINISTRATION AND INSTRUCTION
BUILDINGS
OCCUPIED ENTIRELY BY THE I. C. S.



The Business of This Place is to Raise Salaries

That sounds queer, doesn't it? And yet there is such a place in reality—*The International Correspondence Schools*, of Scranton, Pennsylvania, an institution the entire business of which is to raise not merely salaries—but *your salary*.

To achieve that purpose the I. C. S. has a working capital of many millions of dollars, owns and occupies three large buildings, covering seven acres of floor space, and employs 3000 trained people, all of whom have one object in view—to make it easy for you and all poorly-paid men to earn more. Truly then—the *business of this place is to raise salaries*.

Every month an average of 400 I. C. S. students *voluntarily* report increased salaries. In 1913 over 5000 students so reported. These students live in every section. Right in their own homes, at their present work, the I. C. S. *goes to them*, trains them to advance in their chosen line, or to profitably change to a more congenial occupation.

The same opportunity now knocks at your door. What are you going to do with it? Are you going to lock the door in its face and lag along at the same old wages, or are you going to open the door and give the I. C. S. a chance to show you? Perhaps you don't see how, but the I. C. S. does. That is its business—to *raise your salary*. The I. C. S. has been raising salaries for over 21 years.

Here is all you have to do. From the list in the attached coupon select the position you prefer, and *mark and mail the coupon today*. It costs you nothing but the stamp to learn how the I. C. S. can raise your salary.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

Explain, without any obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X.

Salesmanship
Electrical Engineer
Elec. Lighting Supt.
Electric Car Running
Electric Wireman
Telephone Expert
Architect
Building Contractor
Architectural Draftsman
Structural Engineer
Concrete Construction
Mechan. Engineer
Mechanical Draftsman
Refrigeration Engineer
Civil Engineer
Surveyor
Mine Superintendent
Metal Mining
Locomotive Fireman & Eng.
Stationary Engineer
Textile Manufacturing
Gas Engines

Civil Service
Railway Mail Clerk
Bookkeeping
Stenography & Typewriting
Window Trimming
Show Card Writing
Lettering & Sign Painting
Advertising
Commercial Illustrating
Industrial Designing
Commercial Law
Automobile Running
Teacher
English Branches
Good English for Every One
Agriculture
Poultry Farming
Plumbing & Steam Fitting
Sheet Metal Worker
Navigation
Languages
Chemist
Spanish
German

Name

Present Employer

Street and No.

City State

MAKING "AGE" ATTRACTIVE

ural color is easily effected by a harmless process available to all readers; but in the estimation of those possessing an artistic sense, nothing gives to a man a more distinguished appearance than well-preserved iron-gray hair, and nothing beautifies the complexion and softens the face of a woman so much as perfectly kept and becomingly coiffed gray or white hair.

To preserve the beauty and luster of the hair requires unceasing care. It must be kept scrupulously clean and free from oils so that it will fluff prettily and form a becoming frame to the face. When it is thin and will not lend itself to a becoming arrangement, recourse must be had to artificial aids. White hair is very expensive, particularly when it must match in shade as well as in texture; but it represents money well spent, as the results are most satisfactory, transforming an erstwhile commonplace woman into an attractive one.

The additional hair should be washed each time a shampoo is taken, as white hair must be kept exquisitely clean to be beautiful. Soda and ammonia are ruinous to white hair, which should be washed in suds made of the purest Castile soap. Occasionally a shampoo of eggs may be given, the yolks being used first, and then the whites beaten to a froth; these should be gently rubbed into the scalp, rinsed with repeated douchings of warm water, and lastly in bluing water. Cheap blue streaks the hair, and must be avoided; prepare French bluing precisely as is done by experts in fine laundry work, and subject the hair, both real and artificial, to this bath, which will impart to it a very desirable and beautiful translucency.

As age approaches, the hair cannot be subjected to the rigorous brushing so well tolerated in sturdier years, but it can be buffeted with a piece of satin, with velvet, or with chamois skin. Repeated strokes with a mitten fashioned of any of these materials will soon

give the hair a wonderful sheen that is immensely attractive.

The arrangement of the hair is of greater importance at this period of life than during earlier years; as a rule a high dressing is more becoming than any other style, combs and barrettes adding to the general effect, yet each individual style must be carefully studied to bring out the best points of contour and facial expression. Color harmonies must also be well thought out, lavender and pale yellow being almost invariably becoming, while all the tints of blue show up the silvery effect of the hair. Jet ornaments are extremely smart with gray hair, but should never be used upon white hair; veiled effects and pure white are alone permissible.

Clothes are a powerful factor in bringing out one's physical charms, and, as age advances, more and more care should be given the subject, and more time devoted to the selection of wearing apparel with a view to its fitness and general becomingness. The angle at which a hat is worn can lend an air of distinction to an ordinary costume, and the effect of a French creation may be completely ruined by a bizarre headpiece. However, it is safe to say that neutral tones and styles, with daily care of the three great features above enumerated—the complexion, the teeth, and the hair—will enable every one to pass gracefully into an enjoyable and beautiful old age.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. M. (22).—An excellent remedy for dandruff and falling hair is the following:

Tincture of capsicum	1/2 ounce
Tincture of nux vomica	1/2 ounce
Spirits of rosemary	3 ounces
Distilled witch-hazel water	2 ounces

Mix. Rub well into the scalp with a sponge every night.

JENNIE.—No color is so difficult to retain as auburn; of all shades it is the most beautiful, and you are quite right in wishing to preserve it. Have you tried henna leaves? Use the tea made of them first, in preference to the Oriental henna paste.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.



THEY slouch along, the men with the dragged-out look. They belong to the army of the sleepless. Their look is lifeless—like their work. No promotion beckons them. Sleeplessness is sapping their prospects of success.

Pick the Ostermoor sleeper! His step is brisk, like the spirit behind his work. And that spirit, which earns business position, is the result of rest, sleep—nature's conservator of energy. Each night he gets eight good hours of it. And each night he is thankful to go to his Ostermoor.

"For the rest of your life"

Ostermoor^{\$}15.

"Built—Not Stuffed" Mattress

Ostermoor mattresses help sleep through the absolute, smooth content they give; and the millions of Ostermoor sleepers know that this is so.

An Ostermoor *never* starts you on the *habit of sleeplessness* by waking you *that first time*—through *any* discomfort. Ostermoor Mattresses don't lump, don't mat, don't seam nor retain body hollows like inferior stuffed mattresses, for the reason that Ostermoors are "built—not stuffed"—with thousands of layers of soft, body-contenting cotton. Thus Ostermoors have *elasticity*—seem as if made on some soft springs. Their layers are proof against moisture; and dust can't lodge in them or vermin populate.

MATTRESSES COST

Express Prepaid

4 ft. 6 in. wide by 6 ft. 3 in. long—	
A.C.A. Ticking, 45 lbs.	\$15.00
Satin Finish Ticking, 45 lbs.	16.50
Mercerized Art Twills, 45 lbs.	18.00
Special Hotel Style, 50 lbs.	23.00
Extra Thick French Edge, 60 lbs.	30.00
Special Imperial Edge, 60 lbs.	35.00
Ex. Thick Imperial Edge, 70 lbs.	45.00
Imperial Double Stitched	
French Roll, 80 lbs.	55.00
Mattresses in two parts, 50c extra.	
Smaller sizes cost \$1 less each size.	

An occasional sun-bath is enough to keep an Ostermoor happy for thirty or more years. Letters from Ostermoor sleepers—reproduced in our FREE "Test of Time" Book—prove this.

Send for that FREE Book, "The Test of Time"

It is generously illustrated—it has 144 pages—costs nothing—teaches lots about sleep comfort. *You can sleep, too!* Mattress will be sent to you, *express prepaid*, same day we get your check or money order. Your money will be returned without question if dissatisfied at the end of 30 days. Mattresses packed in leatherette paper and burlap. Fully protected. The Ostermoor trade mark is on end of the genuine. See that it is there—or don't buy.

OSTERMOOR & CO., 216 Elizabeth Street, New York

Canadian Agency: **Albion Feather and Down Co., Ltd., Montreal**



**Special
BARGAIN
SALE**

**"EVERYBODY'S DOING IT"—BUYING
DIAMONDS, WATCHES, JEWELRY, on CREDIT
YOU SAVE ONE-THIRD**

**Diamonds
Watches
on Credit**

Send for **FREE**
**Jewelry
Catalog**

(Established 1858)
STORES IN 20 CITIES
PITTSBURGH
ST. LOUIS
OMAHA

2,000 bargains, in sent free on request. All the new, popular styles in Jewelry—gorgeously beautiful Diamonds, Artistic solid gold and platinum mountings—exquisite things—that sell in some cash stores at almost double our prices. Our Easy Credit Plan is fully explained in Catalog. Send for it today. IT IS FREE.
LOFTIS BROS. & CO., Diamonds, Watches, etc.
Dept. M-844 100 to 108 N. State Street, CHICAGO, ILL.



Practise Deep Breathing

Breathing is the Vital Force of Life. All weaknesses, and ailments attributed to lack of exercise are usually due to shallow and incorrect breathing. The main value of physical exercise lies in the activity it gives the Lungs. Learn to Breathe. Oxygenate your Blood and breathe out the Poison that now clogs your System.

Read my 64-page book, "Deep Breathing." Correct breathing clearly described by diagrams. Contains special breathing exercises and a mass of other valuable information. This treatise is the result of over twenty years of experience as a "Respiratory Specialist." Over 400,000 have already been sold. Endorsed by Medical Societies and Professors of Anatomy and Physiology. Accepted by the National Medical Library at Washington, D. C. Book sent on receipt of ten cents, coin or stamps.

PAUL VON BOECKMANN, R.S.
2081 Tower Building, 110 W. 40th St., New York

**\$130 The Greatest Motor Boat
For The Money Ever Built**

MULLINS 16 foot special steel launch affords the pleasures of motor boating, and provides a safe, seaworthy, dependable motor boat, with graceful lines and beautiful finish—**Absolutely Guaranteed Against Puncture**—Safe as a life boat, with air chambers concealed beneath decks in bow and stern—Can't warp, split, dry out or rot—No seams to leak—No cracks to leak.
MULLINS 16 foot Special Launch is equipped with 2-Cycle, 8-H. P. Ferro engines, that can't stall—Speed 8-12 to 9 miles an hour—One man control—Fitted with **MULLINS** silent under-water exhaust.

This 16 footer seats 8 people comfortably—has 4 foot beam and 11 foot 4 inch cockpit—Positively the greatest launch value ever offered. Write today for beautifully illustrated motor boat catalog, containing full particulars.

THE W. H. MULLINS COMPANY
Salem, Ohio, U. S. A.
328 Franklin St.
THE WORLD'S LARGEST BOAT BUILDERS

MULLINS STEEL BOATS CAN'T SINK

**THE
Keeley
Treatment**

For Liquor and Drug Users

A scientific treatment which has cured half a million in the past thirty-four years, and the one treatment which has stood the severe test of time. Administered by medical experts, at the Keeley Institutes only. For full particulars write

To the Following Keeley Institutes:

Birmingham, Ala.
Hot Springs, Ark.
Los Angeles, Cal., Mark-Stromberg Bldg.
San Francisco, Cal., Douglas Bldg.
Atlanta, Ga.
Dwight, Ill.

Marion, Ind.
Plainfield, Ind.
Crab Orchard, Ky.
Portland, Maine
Greensboro, N. C.
Columbus, Ohio.

Oklahoma City, Okla., 918 S. Stiles St.
Philadelphia, Pa., 812 N. Broad St.
Pittsburgh, Pa., 4246 Fifth Ave.
Columbia, S. C.
Dallas, Texas.
Salt Lake City, Utah.

Seattle, Wash.
Waukegan, Wis.
Winnipeg, Man.
Guatemala City, Guatemala.
Puebla, Mexico.
London, England.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.

**Typewriter Prices
Smashed**

Yes, smashed to rock-bottom. Our factory price is less than others ask for second-hand machines. Try this marvelous typewriter **ten days free**. It's the only typewriter good enough to put out on a **ten year iron clad guarantee** and **easy payment plan**. We give the first buyer in each locality a handsome leatherette carrying case free. Write today.

SALESBURG WRITING MACHINE CO., Dept. 141, Calverton, Illinois

RIDER AGENTS WANTED
In each town to ride and exhibit sample 1914 model. Write for Special Offer. Finest Guaranteed 1914 Models **\$10 to \$27** with Coaster-Brakes and Puncture-Proof Tires. 1912 and 1913 MODELS **\$7 to \$12** ALL OF BEST MAKES. **100 Second-Hand Wheels** All makes and models, good-as-new Great Factory Clearing Sale. **\$3 to \$8** We ship on Approval without a cent freight & allow **10 Days' Free Trial** Tires, coaster-brake wheels, lamps, and sundries, half price. **DO NOT BUY** till you get our catalogue and offer. Write now. **MEAD CYCLE CO. Dept. D-110, CHICAGO**

WHITE VALLEY GEMS LOOK LIKE DIAMONDS
Stand acid and fire diamond test. So hard they easily scratch a file and will cut glass. Brilliance guaranteed 25 years. Mounted in 14k solid gold diamond mountings. See them before paying. Will send you any style ring, pin or stud for examination—all charges prepaid. No money in advance. Money refunded if not satisfactory. Write today for free catalog.
WHITE VALLEY GEM CO., 709 Wulsh Bldg., Indianapolis

Making "Age" Attractive

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety.

AGE may be as seductive as—aye, more so than—youth. Every woman knows that experience can be gained only with increasing years; and every man concedes that the woman whose experiences in life have taught her understanding is of infinitely more enduring charm than the unsophisticated maiden who can follow him in nothing but the lightest badinage.

Despite the remark of an eminent scientist, so seriously taken the world over a few years ago, that a man at sixty has ceased to be useful, *this is an age of no age*. Men in every conceivable walk of life are proving that it is possible to begin anew and to carve success out of failure at an age once considered "old." The world's work is to-day being done by men and women no longer young in years, but in whose hearts the eternal fire of youth glows. So definite is this trend of the times after lightness and buoyancy that there is a danger of overcharging the mark and becoming ridiculous in an effort to appear young. Age need never be unattractive, but nothing is more unfortunate than old age masquerading in the guise of youth.

That "self-preservation is the first law of nature" is an old truism; but its full significance is not appreciated

by most people, who see in it but one meaning—namely, self-defense. In its wider scope, it embraces *the preservation of one's physical attractions*.

If the proper heed were given to this first law of nature, men and women would reach the century mark in the fullness of their prime, instead of declining into a decrepit and pitiable old age; for, of course, the perpetuation of one's charms depends upon self-government, the daily application of the laws of health, since health is the rock upon which the structure is built.

Connected with a famous European spa, is a world-known physician who has devoted much time and thought to the subject of "Age and Attractiveness." From years of observation and study, he declares that three things make or mar the appearance of those nearing or past middle life, namely: the complexion, the teeth, and the hair. This is doubtless the general consensus of opinion. By complexion is not meant alone clearness of the skin and its freedom from blemishes, but the firm roundness and shapeliness of outline so characteristic of well-preserved tissues. The complexion, therefore, embraces all these things, and those who give no thought or attention to the matter are very apt to show evidences of age at thirty-five, or even younger.

Women who are nearing these years

should guard against the appearance of the first danger signals that age gives out—a fullness about the lower part of the face. Many mistake this for a double chin, and straightway begin to diet for superfluous flesh! Very frequently the fullness *does* mean a double chin, but usually it is the first indication of sagging tissues; the muscles are beginning to lose their elasticity, their tone, and are *drooping*. It takes years for them to droop so markedly that they sag in pendulous folds below the jawbone, but long before this unmistakable stage is reached, they have become veritable signposts of advancing age. Why permit this to occur? If the tissues surrounding the chin are well preserved, that is, if the sharp edge of the jawbone is maintained, then the face retains its youthfulness indefinitely.

Nothing is so efficacious in maintaining and in restoring tone to muscular structure as judicious massage. If the services of a professional can be employed, so much the better; otherwise, every woman should study the art and make it part of her daily toilet. The tissues are grasped at the middle of the chin and with firm strokes pressed inward upon the underlying bone, and upward toward the ears, never downward toward the neck; they sag down of their own inclination, and the object of the massage is to train them to remain firmly in position and not to wander away from their attachments.

A cream containing astringents should

be rubbed into the parts during massage. Lotions that have a tendency to shrink superabundant tissues may be mopped on afterward, and the chin line may even be bound up during sleep with those lotions, or, better still, with a celebrated lotion used by the French and handed down to them from the days of the courts of beauty, when women lived and had their being only in physical charms. This French

balm,* when used daily, tones up the soft structures, restores local vitality, removes discolorations—in fact, restores the bloom of youth. Bandages are moistened in it and bound over the parts. Of course, several applications will not prove effectual; it must be used day in and day out.

Good results are gained by the simple use of ice, or of very cold compresses bound into position and removed the moment they become warm. If ice is used, it should be rubbed back and forth over and under the chin until the

parts glow. Pause for a few moments and start again, so consuming ten minutes, two, three, four times a day. Persistently kept up, the ice treatment gives satisfaction in many instances; but there are those whose tissues become blotchy if subjected to it, when it should not be used.

Wrinkles are not always an evidence of age; many women of twenty-five show upon the face the signs of an un-

*Directions for the treatment of wrinkles, also the formula for this French wrinkle balm, will be mailed upon application.



Most attractive are transparent ornaments upon hair softly waved and worn high.

Making "Age" Attractive

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety.

AGE may be as seductive as—aye, more so than—youth. Every woman knows that experience can be gained only with increasing years; and every man concedes that the woman whose experiences in life have taught her understanding is of infinitely more enduring charm than the unsophisticated maiden who can follow him in nothing but the lightest badinage.

Despite the remark of an eminent scientist, so seriously taken the world over a few years ago, that a man at sixty has ceased to be useful, *this is an age of no age*. Men in every conceivable walk of life are proving that it is possible to begin anew and to carve success out of failure at an age once considered "old." The world's work is to-day being done by men and women no longer young in years, but in whose hearts the eternal fire of youth glows. So definite is this trend of the times after lightness and buoyancy that there is a danger of overcharging the mark and becoming ridiculous in an effort to appear young. Age need never be unattractive, but nothing is more unfortunate than old age masquerading in the guise of youth.

That "self-preservation is the first law of nature" is an old truism; but its full significance is not appreciated

by most people, who see in it but one meaning—namely, self-defense. In its wider scope, it embraces *the preservation of one's physical attractions*.

If the proper heed were given to this first law of nature, men and women would reach the century mark in the fullness of their prime, instead of declining into a decrepit and pitiable old age; for, of course, the perpetuation of one's charms depends upon self-government, the daily application of the laws of health, since health is the rock upon which the structure is built.

Connected with a famous European spa, is a world-known physician who has devoted much time and thought to the subject of "Age and Attractiveness." From years of observation and study, he declares that three things make or mar the appearance of those nearing or past middle life, namely: the complexion, the teeth, and the hair. This is doubtless the general consensus of opinion. By complexion is not meant alone clearness of the skin and its freedom from blemishes, but the firm roundness and shapeliness of outline so characteristic of well-preserved tissues. The complexion, therefore, embraces all these things, and those who give no thought or attention to the matter are very apt to show evidences of age at thirty-five, or even younger.

Women who are nearing these years

should guard against the appearance of the first danger signals that age gives out—a fullness about the lower part of the face. Many mistake this for a double chin, and straightway begin to diet for superfluous flesh! Very frequently the fullness *does* mean a double chin, but usually it is the first indication of sagging tissues; the muscles are beginning to lose their elasticity, their tone, and are *drooping*. It takes years for them to droop so markedly that they sag in pendulous folds below the jawbone, but long before this unmistakable stage is reached, they have become veritable signposts of advancing age. Why permit this to occur? If the tissues surrounding the chin are well preserved, that is, if the sharp edge of the jawbone is maintained, then the face retains its youthfulness indefinitely.

Nothing is so efficacious in maintaining and in restoring tone to muscular structure as judicious massage. If the services of a professional can be employed, so much the better; otherwise, every woman should study the art and make it part of her daily toilet. The tissues are grasped at the middle of the chin and with firm strokes pressed inward upon the underlying bone, and upward toward the ears, never downward toward the neck; they sag down of their own inclination, and the object of the massage is to train them to remain firmly in position and not to wander away from their attachments.

A cream containing astringents should

be rubbed into the parts during massage. Lotions that have a tendency to shrink superabundant tissues may be mopped on afterward, and the chin line may even be bound up during sleep with those lotions, or, better still, with a celebrated lotion used by the French and handed down to them from the days of the courts of beauty, when women lived and had their being only in physical charms. This French

balm,* when used daily, tones up the soft structures, restores local vitality, removes discolorations—in fact, restores the bloom of youth. Bandages are moistened in it and bound over the parts. Of course, several applications will not prove effectual; it must be used day in and day out.

Good results are gained by the simple use of ice, or of very cold compresses bound into position and removed the moment they become warm. If ice is used, it should be rubbed back and forth over and under the chin until the

parts glow. Pause for a few moments and start again, so consuming ten minutes, two, three, four times a day. Persistently kept up, the ice treatment gives satisfaction in many instances; but there are those whose tissues become blotchy if subjected to it, when it should not be used.

Wrinkles are not always an evidence of age; many women of twenty-five show upon the face the signs of an un-

*Directions for the treatment of wrinkles, also the formula for this French wrinkle balm, will be mailed upon application.



Most attractive are transparent ornaments upon hair softly waved and worn high.

governable temper or of a disagreeable disposition. Wrinkles need never appear if placidity of the mind is cultivated and the proper care is given the skin. Often a shriveled, yellow complexion that belies one's age results from the use of cheap soap and cosmetics. Old faces are frequently the result, too, of ill health, persistent indoor confinement, weak eyes, inactivity of the liver, and a host of other conditions too numerous to mention. To retain the complexion, or, in other words, a fresh, bright countenance, demands daily local care as well as constant attention to one's general physical needs. Directions for the care of the complexion will be sent on application.

Since the first signs of increasing years are apt to show themselves upon the lower face, it goes without saying that the teeth should be given far more care than is usually bestowed upon them. Much can be done to beautify the teeth after they have begun to break down, but whatever is done will never restore them to their original condition. Both men and women have been known to look twenty—yes, thirty—years younger after they have been fitted with artificial teeth, because the entire contour of the face depends upon the fullness that is given to the cheeks by them.

As soon as the teeth begin to break down, the cheeks fall in; whenever a tooth is removed, the blood supply is cut off from that part of the jaw, and it begins to shrink. In time this shrinkage of the jaws completely alters the shape of the face. The preservation of the teeth, therefore, is one of the most important points in the development of an attractive old age. Scientific dentistry is doing wonderful things



Preserve youthful contour by rubbing the tissues (muscles) up—
always up—never down.

to make this possible. Teeth that have been broken down through neglect can be built up to resemble the originals so exactly that even an expert cannot detect the difference. Spaces caused by loss of teeth are now bridged over in ways undreamed of a few years ago. Cavities are no longer filled with unsightly metals, but with enamel that matches the tooth so perfectly that detection is impossible.

Much time, also, is being devoted by chemists to preparations that will preserve the gums, and so prevent the tendency to sponginess or shrinkage so common in advancing years. Indeed, a very great deal of trouble with the teeth is caused by an unhealthy condition of the gums. Much of this unhealthiness is due to a deposit upon the neck of the tooth called tartar, which induces the gums to shrink away from the teeth. This is alone sufficient reason that frequent visits be made to the dentist for the removal of these deposits; and in the meantime, such remedies and measures should be employed as will prevent its formation.

As already pointed out in previous articles, the natural chemical reaction

of saliva is alkaline, or, rather, such has been the belief until recently, when scientific searchings into the causes of things have shown that saliva is normally neutral, neither acid nor alkaline. But in nine cases out of ten, it is acid, and frequently hyperacid. That is why, in so many cases, unpleasant conditions of the teeth and gums begin to manifest themselves by the time middle life is reached.

A wash that will neutralize the secretions of the mouth is of even more imperative need than the daily scrubbing of the teeth, for of what avail is scrubbing of the teeth when the agents that give rise to all sorts of disfiguring mouth troubles are permitted to continue doing their destructive work? Of course, these agents do not bring about destroying conditions in a day or a week or a year; but just as few of us are provident and begin in early life to save the pennies for a rainy day, so do we neglect in the days of our youth the preservation of our charms against the encroachments of oncoming years. It is wise to use a proper mouth wash several times daily, one that will not only neutralize saliva, but that will also harden and preserve the gums. There are a great many good ones on the market, and there are many formulas to choose from. One of the best is that of the French Codex:

ANTISEPTIC MOUTH WASH.

Oil of cinnamon	15 minims
Oil of anise	30 minims
Oil of clove	30 minims
Oil of peppermint	2 drams
Tincture of benzoin	2 drams
Tincture of guaiac	2 drams
Tincture of pellitory	2 drams
Tincture of cochineal	5 drams
Water	6 ounces
Alcohol, to make	32 ounces

Mix, let stand twenty-four hours, and filter. For use, add teaspoonful to a glass of water.

Massage of the gums is now being highly recommended for their preservation when still healthy, and for their restoration when they have begun to shrink or have become spongy. The tip of the index finger is employed, and the gums rubbed briskly from above

downward in the upper jaw and vice versa on the lower jaw; the idea to be borne in mind being to press and rub them *toward the teeth*, always toward, never away from the teeth. An astringent powder facilitates the work. Here are two:

No. 1.

Potassium chlorate	1½ ounce
Borax	1 ounce
Oil of wintergreen	20 minims
Oil of peppermint	20 minims
Calcium carbonate	6 ounces

No. 2.

Cream of tartar	12 ounces
Alum	2½ ounces
Cochineal	2 ounces
Cinnamon	1 ounce
Sodium chloride	1 ounce

Any quantity of both wash and powder can be made up.

Common salt is an excellent tonic for both gums and teeth; it may be rubbed into the gums with the finger tips just as the foregoing powders are, and may be used on the tooth brush for cleansing purposes. If it cannot be tolerated at first, weakening it by the addition of corn starch or magnesia will make it more palatable, and in time the full strength can be employed.

Nothing contributes so much toward an attractive appearance and elicits greater admiration than beautifully kept hair. When no attention is given the hair, and it is allowed to degenerate, not only does one's age become very apparent, but years are often added to it. High-bred society women, well-known professional beauties, and men and women constantly before the public understand this so well that they do not hesitate to resort to any measures that will insure them a well-preserved and youthful head of hair.

The approach of gray hair is a source of deep anxiety to those who feel that their happiness or their success depends upon its natural tone. Gray hair, like wrinkles, does not always indicate age; in such instances, the use of coloring matter may be justifiable. Genuine hair dyes are injurious because they contain powerful poisons to which some are far more susceptible than others. The restoration of gray hair to its nat-

governable temper or of a disagreeable disposition. Wrinkles need never appear if placidity of the mind is cultivated and the proper care is given the skin. Often a shriveled, yellow complexion that belies one's age results from the use of cheap soap and cosmetics. Old faces are frequently the result, too, of ill health, persistent indoor confinement, weak eyes, inactivity of the liver, and a host of other conditions too numerous to mention. To retain the complexion, or, in other words, a fresh, bright countenance, demands daily local care as well as constant attention to one's general physical needs. Directions for the care of the complexion will be sent on application.

Since the first signs of increasing years are apt to show themselves upon the lower face, it goes without saying that the teeth should be given far more care than is usually bestowed upon them. Much can be done to beautify the teeth after they have begun to break down, but whatever is done will never restore them to their original condition. Both men and women have been known to look twenty—yes, thirty—years younger after they have been fitted with artificial teeth, because the entire contour of the face depends upon the fullness that is given to the cheeks by them.

As soon as the teeth begin to break down, the cheeks fall in; whenever a tooth is removed, the blood supply is cut off from that part of the jaw, and it begins to shrink. In time this shrinkage of the jaws completely alters the shape of the face. The preservation of the teeth, therefore, is one of the most important points in the development of an attractive old age. Scientific dentistry is doing wonderful things



Preserve youthful contour by rubbing the tissues (muscles) up—always up—never down.

to make this possible. Teeth that have been broken down through neglect can be built up to resemble the originals so exactly that even an expert cannot detect the difference. Spaces caused by loss of teeth are now bridged over in ways undreamed of a few years ago. Cavities are no longer filled with unsightly metals, but with enamel that matches the tooth so perfectly that detection is impossible.

Much time, also, is being devoted by chemists to preparations that will preserve the gums, and so prevent the tendency to sponginess or shrinkage so common in advancing years. Indeed, a very great deal of trouble with the teeth is caused by an unhealthy condition of the gums. Much of this unhealthiness is due to a deposit upon the neck of the tooth called tartar, which induces the gums to shrink away from the teeth. This is alone sufficient reason that frequent visits be made to the dentist for the removal of these deposits; and in the meantime, such remedies and measures should be employed as will prevent its formation.

As already pointed out in previous articles, the natural chemical reaction

of saliva is alkaline, or, rather, such has been the belief until recently, when scientific searchings into the causes of things have shown that saliva is normally neutral, neither acid nor alkaline. But in nine cases out of ten, it is acid, and frequently hyperacid. That is why, in so many cases, unpleasant conditions of the teeth and gums begin to manifest themselves by the time middle life is reached.

A wash that will neutralize the secretions of the mouth is of even more imperative need than the daily scrubbing of the teeth, for of what avail is scrubbing of the teeth when the agents that give rise to all sorts of disfiguring mouth troubles are permitted to continue doing their destructive work? Of course, these agents do not bring about destroying conditions in a day or a week or a year; but just as few of us are provident and begin in early life to save the pennies for a rainy day, so do we neglect in the days of our youth the preservation of our charms against the encroachments of oncoming years. It is wise to use a proper mouth wash several times daily, one that will not only neutralize saliva, but that will also harden and preserve the gums. There are a great many good ones on the market, and there are many formulas to choose from. One of the best is that of the French Codex:

ANTISEPTIC MOUTH WASH.

Oil of cinnamon	15 minims
Oil of anise	30 minims
Oil of clove	30 minims
Oil of peppermint	2 drams
Tincture of benzoin	2 drams
Tincture of guaiac	2 drams
Tincture of pellitory	2 drams
Tincture of cochineal	5 drams
Water	6 ounces
Alcohol, to make	32 ounces

Mix, let stand twenty-four hours, and filter. For use, add teaspoonful to a glass of water.

Massage of the gums is now being highly recommended for their preservation when still healthy, and for their restoration when they have begun to shrink or have become spongy. The tip of the index finger is employed, and the gums rubbed briskly from above

downward in the upper jaw and vice versa on the lower jaw; the idea to be borne in mind being to press and rub them *toward the teeth*, always toward, never away from the teeth. An astringent powder facilitates the work. Here are two:

No. 1.

Potassium chlorate	1½ ounce
Borax	1 ounce
Oil of wintergreen	20 minims
Oil of peppermint	20 minims
Calcium carbonate	6 ounces

No. 2.

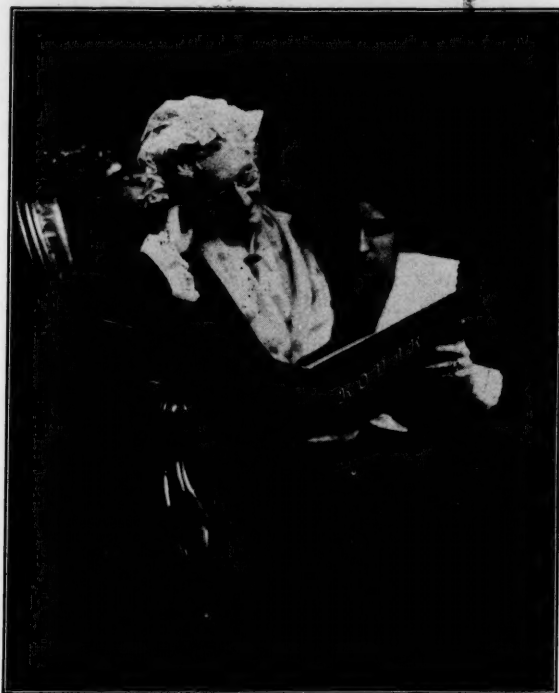
Cream of tartar	12 ounces
Alum	2½ ounces
Cochineal	2 ounces
Cinnamon	1 ounce
Sodium chloride	1 ounce

Any quantity of both wash and powder can be made up.

Common salt is an excellent tonic for both gums and teeth; it may be rubbed into the gums with the finger tips just as the foregoing powders are, and may be used on the tooth brush for cleansing purposes. If it cannot be tolerated at first, weakening it by the addition of corn starch or magnesia will make it more palatable, and in time the full strength can be employed.

Nothing contributes so much toward an attractive appearance and elicits greater admiration than beautifully kept hair. When no attention is given the hair, and it is allowed to degenerate, not only does one's age become very apparent, but years are often added to it. High-bred society women, well-known professional beauties, and men and women constantly before the public understand this so well that they do not hesitate to resort to any measures that will insure them a well-preserved and youthful head of hair.

The approach of gray hair is a source of deep anxiety to those who feel that their happiness or their success depends upon its natural tone. Gray hair, like wrinkles, does not always indicate age; in such instances, the use of coloring matter may be justifiable. Genuine hair dyes are injurious because they contain powerful poisons to which some are far more susceptible than others. The restoration of gray hair to its nat-



*If it
isn't an
Eastman,
it isn't
a Kodak.*

The Kodak Story

The story of the Kodak album—it's a continued and never concluded story that grips you stronger with every chapter—a story that fascinates every member of the family from grandmother to the kiddies because it's a personal story full of human interest. Let Kodak keep that story for you.

Ask your dealer, or write us, for "At Home with the Kodak," a delightfully illustrated little book that tells about home pictures—flashlights, groups, home portraits and the like—and how to make them. It's mailed without charge.

EASTMAN KODAK CO., ROCHESTER, N. Y.

HAIR AND SKIN BEAUTY



PRESERVED BY CUTICURA SOAP

Assisted by occasional use of Cuticura Ointment. No others do so much for the skin, scalp, hair and hands.

Cuticura Soap and Cuticura Ointment are sold throughout the world. Send post-card to nearest depot for free sample of each with 32-page book: Newbery, 27, Charterhouse Sq., London; E. Towns & Co., Sydney, N. S. W.; Lennon, Ltd., Cape Town; Muller, Maclean & Co., Calcutta and Bombay; Potter Drug & Chem. Corp., Boston, U. S. A.

Men who shave and shampoo with Cuticura Soap will find it best for skin and scalp.



25 years on the market. Sold by all druggists wherever heads ache. Twelve wafers for 25 cents—or send 10 cents for trial sample—three doses.
The Zymole Co., 108 John St., New York

Don't Wear a Truss

TRUSS-WEARERS, Here's Great, Good, News.

Tiresome, Torturous Trusses Can Be Thrown Away FOREVER. And it's All Because
STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the painful truss, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive purposely to prevent slipping and to afford an arrangement to hold the parts securely in place. **NO STRAPS, BUCKLES OR SPRINGS ATTACHED**—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have treated themselves in the privacy of the home—most obstinate cases conquered—no delay from work. Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive. When the weakened muscles recover then there is no further use for truss. **Awarded Gold Medal International Exposition, Rome, Grand Prix at Paris. Write TODAY and let us prove what we say by sending**
TRIAL PLAPAO—ABSOLUTELY FREE
PLAPAO CORPORATION, Block 1162 St. Louis, Mo.



Grand Prix.

DR. HALL'S

Dr. Hall's Sexual KNOWLEDGE

By Dr. Winfield Scott Hall
Head of Physiology
N. W. Univ. Medical School
Authority on Sex Matters.
Plain Truths of Sex Life
every person needs to know;
Safety in marriage relation;
Dangers of sexual abuses,
"social evil," venereal diseases,
caused by sexual ignorance;
"fakes" on sexual weakness;
secrets of sexual strength;
"Eugenics" fully explained.

Illustrated; 320 pages
ONLY \$1.10 postpaid
(Under plain wrapper)

International Bible House, 1544 Chestnut, Phila., Pa.

NEW BOOK

My Magazine "Investing for Profit"

FREE for Six Months

Send me your name and address right NOW and I will send you **Investing for Profit** magazine absolutely free for six months. It tells how to get the utmost earnings from your money—how to tell good investments—how to pick the most profitable of sound investments. It reveals how bankers and capitalists make \$1,000 grow to \$22,000—in fact gives you the vital investing information that should enable you to make your money grow proportionately. I have decided this month to give 500 six month subscriptions to **Investing for Profit FREE!** Every copy is

Worth at Least \$10

to every investor—perhaps a fortune. Send your name and address now, mention this paper and get a **Free** introductory subscription. Conditions may prevent repeating this offer. Better take it now. You'll be willing to pay 10c a copy after you have read it six months.

B. L. BARBER, Pub., R418 30 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago

Why Pay \$17.50?

The material and workmanship of this chair—Genuine, Select, Quarter Sawn White Oak of rare quality—costs less than half of \$17.50 at the factory. Yet that is the price you would pay for it at a store.

We Ship It Direct From Our Factory In Sections—

You Set It Up and Save \$8.55

You pay only for materials, workmanship, and the usual small profit to manufacturer. We save you all other unnecessary expenses—dealer's profit, jobber's profit, traveling men's salaries, high packing expenses—and freight rates, etc.—almost 40%. And back of each piece is our guarantee—if you are not satisfied at any time within a full year you may ship it back and we immediately refund your money, including freight.

"COME-PACKET"
FURNITURE

Only \$8.95 In Four Sections

Select Quartered WHITE Oak. Built with the care and skill of the old master cabinet makers—possessing an individuality and artistic charm befitting the home of quality. Eight different shades of finish. Imperial leather cushions. Packed in compact crate—shipped at knock-down rates.

New 1914 Catalog FREE

Shows over 400 other beautiful examples of Come-Packet craftsmanship in living, dining and bedroom furniture—in sections—at 30% to 60% price savings. Sent free—postpaid. Mail postal today.

Come-Packet Furniture Co., 410 Dor St., Toledo, O.

MULLINS STEEL BOATS CAN'T SINK

Safe as a life boat—Cannot warp or rot—No seams to leak—Just but a coat of paint to keep in commission—Guaranteed absolutely against punctures. The easiest boat to row and to keep its course—Ideal for recreation or livery. Write for Catalog of Motor Boats, Row Boats, Hunting Boats and Canoes. FREE.

THE W. H. MULLINS CO.
408 Franklin St. Salem, O., U.S.A.
The World's Largest Boat Builders.

COST LESS—LAST LONGER—THAN WOOD BOATS

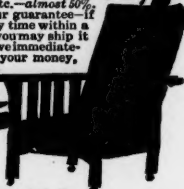
Asthma AND Hay Fever

Send for **Free Trial Bottle of HIMALYA**, the valuable remedy for Hay Fever and Asthma. We have hundreds of reliable testimonials showing positive and permanent cures to persons who have suffered for years after other remedies and change of climate had failed.


Write today to the

HIMALYA CO.

86 Warren Ave. W.
Detroit, Mich.



DELICATE CHILDREN



DELICATE CHILDREN

respond quickly to the strengthening and body-building virtues of Vinol because it contains in delicious combination two famous tonics—the medicinal elements of the finest Cod Liver Oil and peptonate of iron—but no oil. Children love it—it restores appetite and creates strength. Its superiority as a tonic reconstructor in all weak, run-down conditions and for chronic coughs, colds, and bronchitis is guaranteed by over 5000 druggists.

For sale by one druggist in a place. Look for the Vinol store where you live

Trial sample sent free on receipt of 2-cent stamp.

Chester Kent & Co., Boston, Mass.



Ten Days' Free Trial

allowed on every bicycle we sell. We **Ship on Approval** and trial to anyone in the U.S. and **prepay the freight**. If you are not satisfied with the bicycle after using it ten days, ship it back and don't pay a cent.

FACTORY PRICES Do not buy a bicycle or a pair of tires from anyone at any price until you receive our latest Art Catalog, of high grade bicycles and sundries and learn our unheard-of prices and marvelous new special offers.

IT ONLY COSTS a cent to write a postal and everything will be sent you **FREE** by return mail. You will get much valuable information. **Do Not Wait; write it NOW!** **TIRE, Coaster-Brake, rear wheels, lamps, parts, repairs and sundries of all kinds at half usual prices.** **MEAD CYCLE CO. Dept. D-110 CHICAGO**

You Can Weigh What You Should Weigh

You can, I know it, because I have reduced 65,000 women and have built up as many more—scientifically, naturally, without drugs; in the privacy of their own rooms; I can build up your vitality—at the same time I strengthen your heart action; can teach you how to breathe, to stand, to walk and relieve such ailments as nervousness, torpid liver, constipation, indigestion, etc.

One Pupil writes: "I weigh 83 pounds less, and I have gained wonderfully in strength." Another says: "Last May I weighed 108 pounds, this May I weigh 120, and oh, I feel SO WELL."

Write today for my free booklet

SUSANNA COCROFT

Dept. 81 624 Michigan Blvd., Chicago

Author of "Growth in Science," "Self-Sufficiency," etc.





The Spirit of Service

WHEN the land is storm-swept, when trains are stalled and roads are blocked, the telephone trouble-hunter with snow shoes and climbers makes his lonely fight to keep the wire highways open.

These men can be trusted to face hardship and danger, because they realize that snow-bound farms, homes and cities must be kept in touch with the world.

This same spirit of service animates the whole Bell telephone system. The linemen show it when they carry the wires across mountains and wilderness. It is found in the girl at the switchboard who sticks to her post despite fire or flood. It inspires the leaders of the

telephone forces, who are finally responsible to the public for good service.

This spirit of service is found in the recent rearrangement of the telephone business to conform with present public policy, without recourse to courts.

The Bell System has grown to be one of the largest corporations in the country, in response to the telephone needs of the public, and must keep up with increasing demands.

However large it may become, this corporation will always be responsive to the needs of the people, because it is animated by the spirit of service. It has shown that men and women, co-operating for a great purpose, may be as good citizens collectively as individually.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

One Policy

One System

Universal Service

Hartman Will Trust You Requires No References Asks No Advance Payment

**No. 0E712—Warswick
Brussels Rug Bargain**



No. 7D286—Hartman's Refrigerator Bargain



**No. 3F714—Complete
Bed Outfit Bargain**



Remarkable Bargain Sale

Now is the time to furnish--to get the rug, rocker, refrigerator or any of those other home-furnishings you've been needing so long. Never has this great House of Hartman, or anyone else, been able to equal these truly remarkable values. The importance of this great Price-Smashing Sale of Guaranteed Dependable Quality Home Furnishings, cannot be over estimated.

No Need of Meagerly Furnished Homes

Not only the necessities of home-furnishing, but the comforts and even the luxuries, found here-to-fore only in the homes of the rich and prosperous have been brought within the reach of even those of very limited means by the remarkably low prices and most attractive assortment here offered to the public. On the first floor, the men's, women's, children's and baby's wear, the **FREE Hartman Credit Bargain Book** and find out for yourself. It shows everything in home-furnishings, including a marvelous assortment of carpets, rugs and draperies in color, patterns and designs photographed in color. On the other floors, the home-furnishings, many times the size of large city store, including

Furniture Stoves, Ranges Dishes Jewelry
Carpets Refrigerators Clocks Curtains
Rugs Silverware Go-Carts Springs
Bedding Mattresses Sewing Machines

Your Credit Good at Hartman's

Your Credit Good at Hartman's

To the millions of honest home-lovers, everywhere, Hartman says: "I will trust you—just as I am trusting over a million of other home-lovers who are now buying their household needs from Hartman." Hartman's transactions with you are strictly confidential, no references are asked—no embarrassment. Your neighbors need not know your business—you'll like the Hartman plan when you know all about it.

Hartman Makes Easiest Terms

No matter who you are or where you live, your credit is good at Hartman's. No matter how small your income Hartman meets your requirements. We trust home-lovers everywhere on an open charge account without any red tape. No credit check, no credit report, no mortgage to sign, no money to pay—nor do we ask for any security. The Hartman modern credit system is free from ALL objectionable features. With long-term credit as easy as cash, there is no reason for anyone, even of limited income, to live in a meagerly furnished home.

During this big sale you can order any of the new appliances at special prices. They are used bargains without sending us any advance payment.

30 Days' Free Examination

Every Hartman Bargain must actually sell itself on its own merit, after you see it in your own home. At the end of a month return anything you do not find to be perfectly satisfactory. Hartman refunds your money—including freight.

Send Address On Postal NOW For Hartman's Big

FREE Bargain Catalog

You must see this Mammoth Hartman Credit Special Bargain Book—so send name and address on postal today to

HARTMAN

Furniture & Carpet Co.
3940 Wentworth Ave.
Chicago, Ill.

**No. 1D332—Hartman's
Big Rocker Bargain**

Large, comfortable rocker, selected hardwood finished American quarter-sawn oak, upholstered Imperial leather. Strongly built, stout runners. The carvings on posts and runners are unusually deep and beautiful—unique designs. Back tufted, handsomely ruffled all around edge. Seat set over full, strong construction, handsome ruffled front. Our bargain price for this remarkable rocker only \$3.65



inch rubber tires. Most remarkable bargain at **\$4.95** **50c** Per Month
No. 5F466—Stunning Colonial Library Table



No. 7F460—Hartman's Ball Bearing Washer

Tub of eight shirt capacity, bottom and sides corrugated, top of selected cypress, known to withstand weather, eye, soap and acids. Heavy varnished. Lid has detachable hinges, easily removed. Tub supported on heavy legs, strongly braced. Improved wash attachment securely fastened. Ball bearing connections makes the work so easy that it is a pleasure to wash with this machine. Four-pronged dasher, large and strong. Does not split or crack. Remarkable

50¢ Per Month

HARTMAN'S
100% Guaranteed

Legal
We Unreservedly Guarantee
article sold by us to be exactly as
represented and described in our
catalog.
Guarantee our prices to be
lowest of any other quality.

We Guarantee that the price of our goods is lower than those of equal quality and quantity for goods of equal quality and quantity. We Guarantee approval, and if every article on receipt of order within 30 days from receipt of order anything is not perfect, we will refund the money. FOR ANY

**The Big
Credit
SPECIAL
BARGAIN
Book
FREE**



To school Well Fed on

Grape=Nuts and cream

"There's a Reason"